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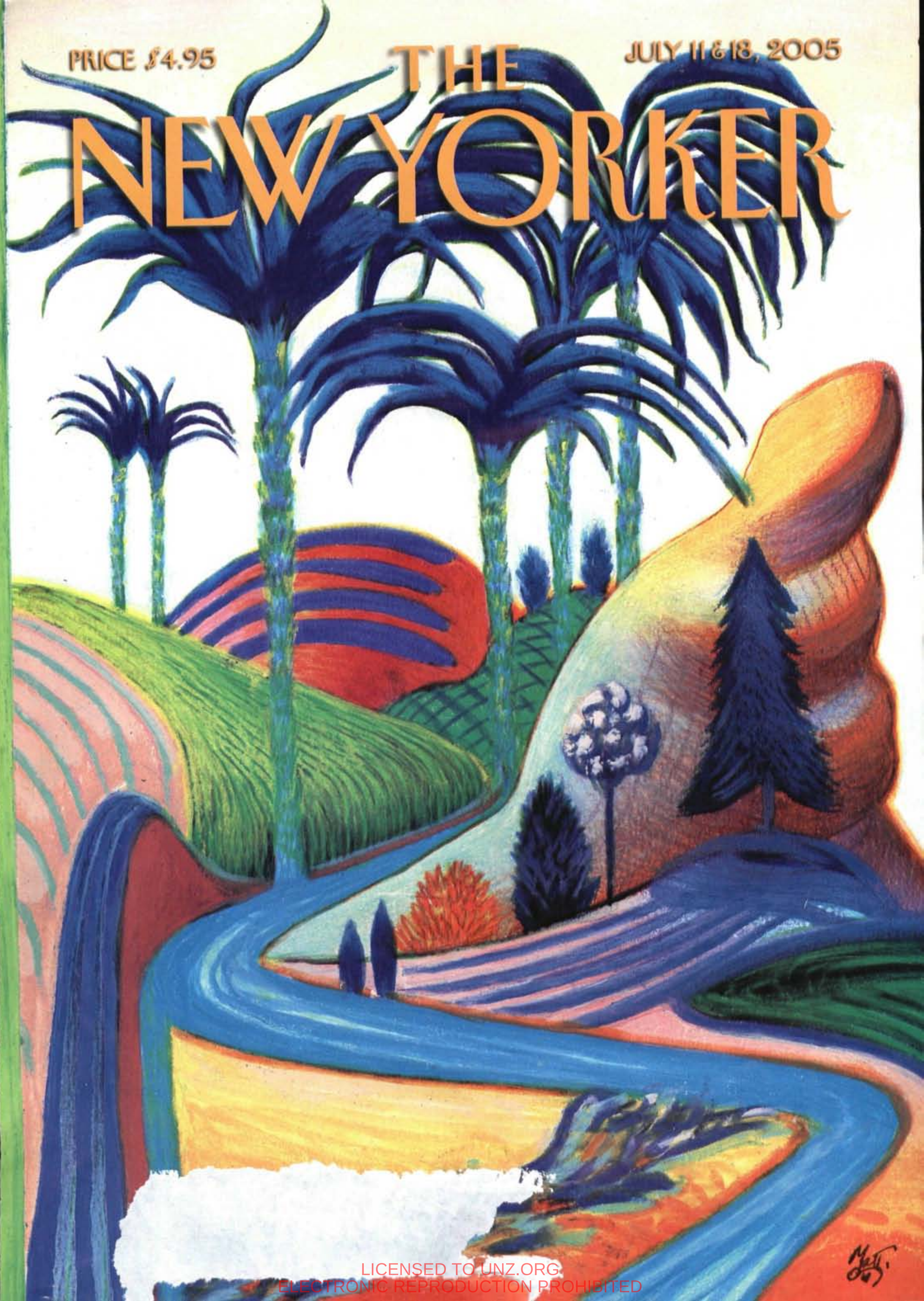
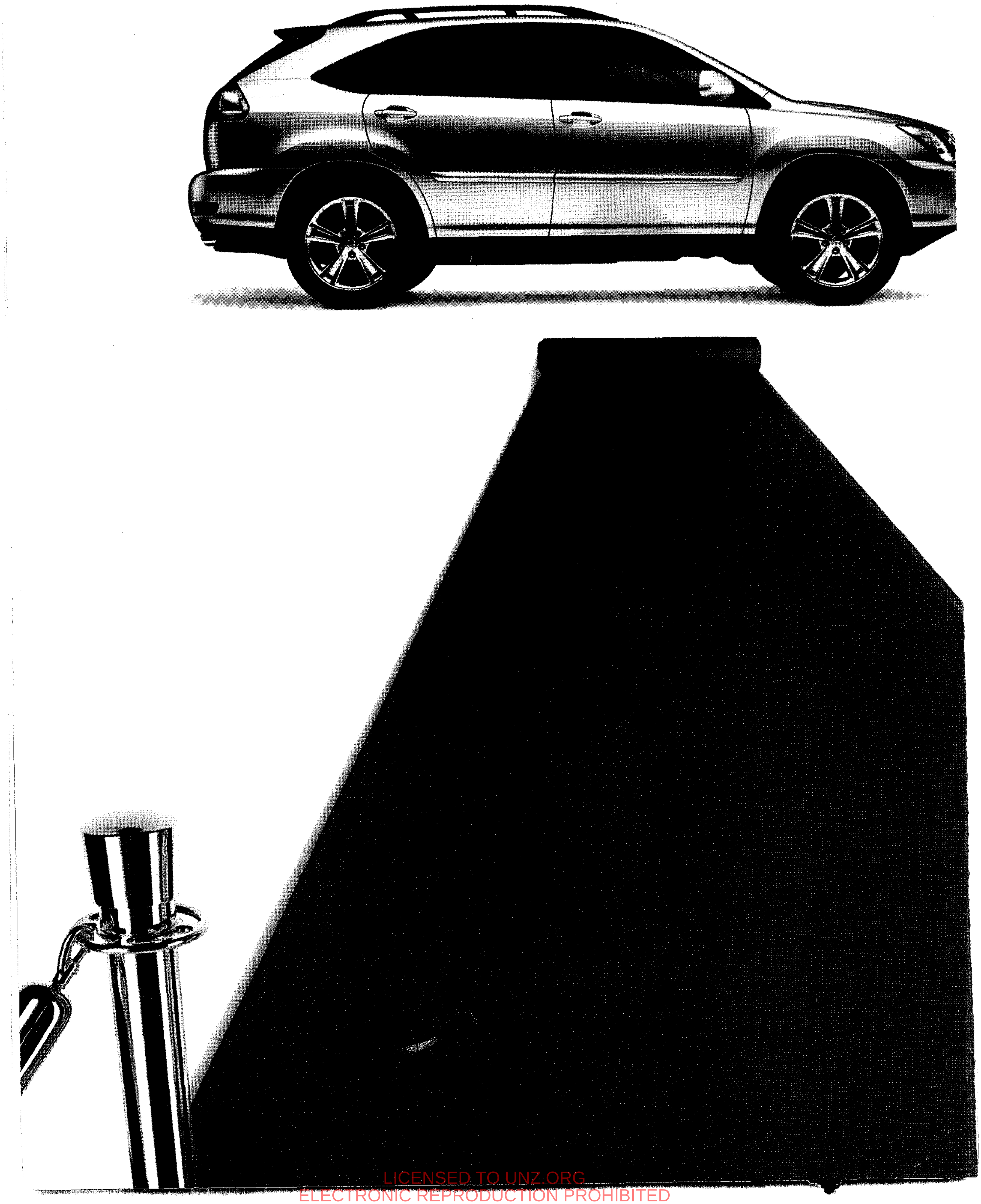
JULY 11 & 18, 2005





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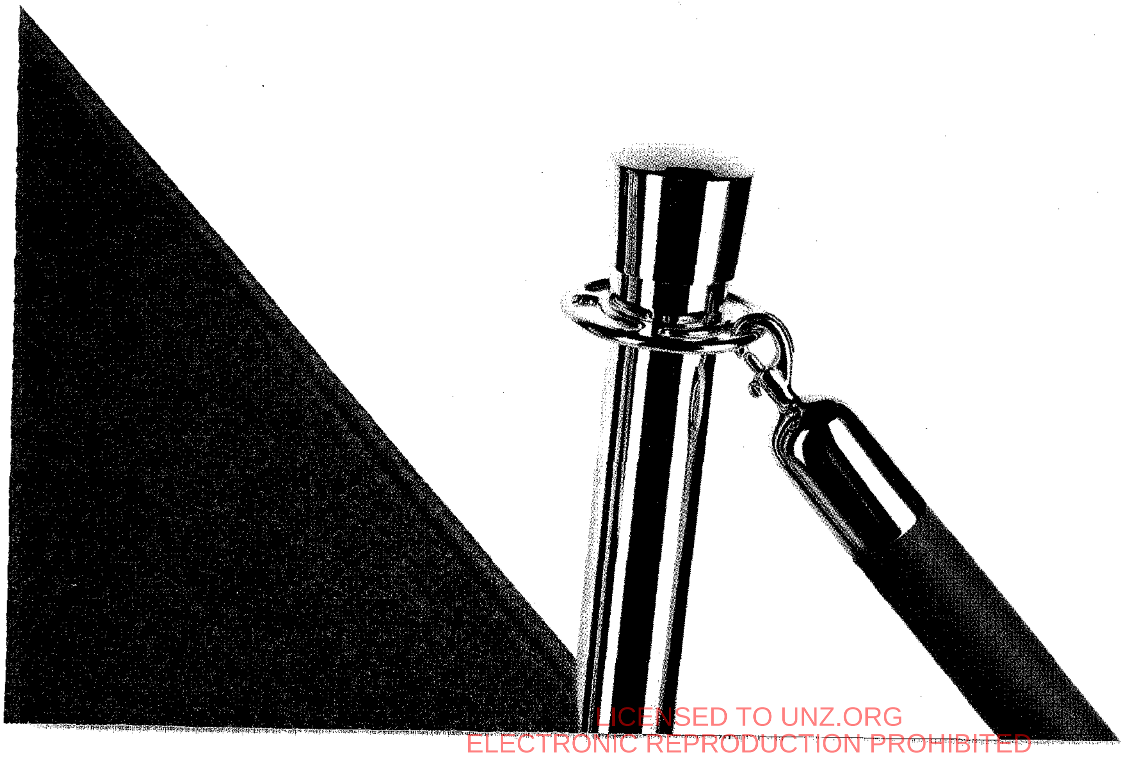

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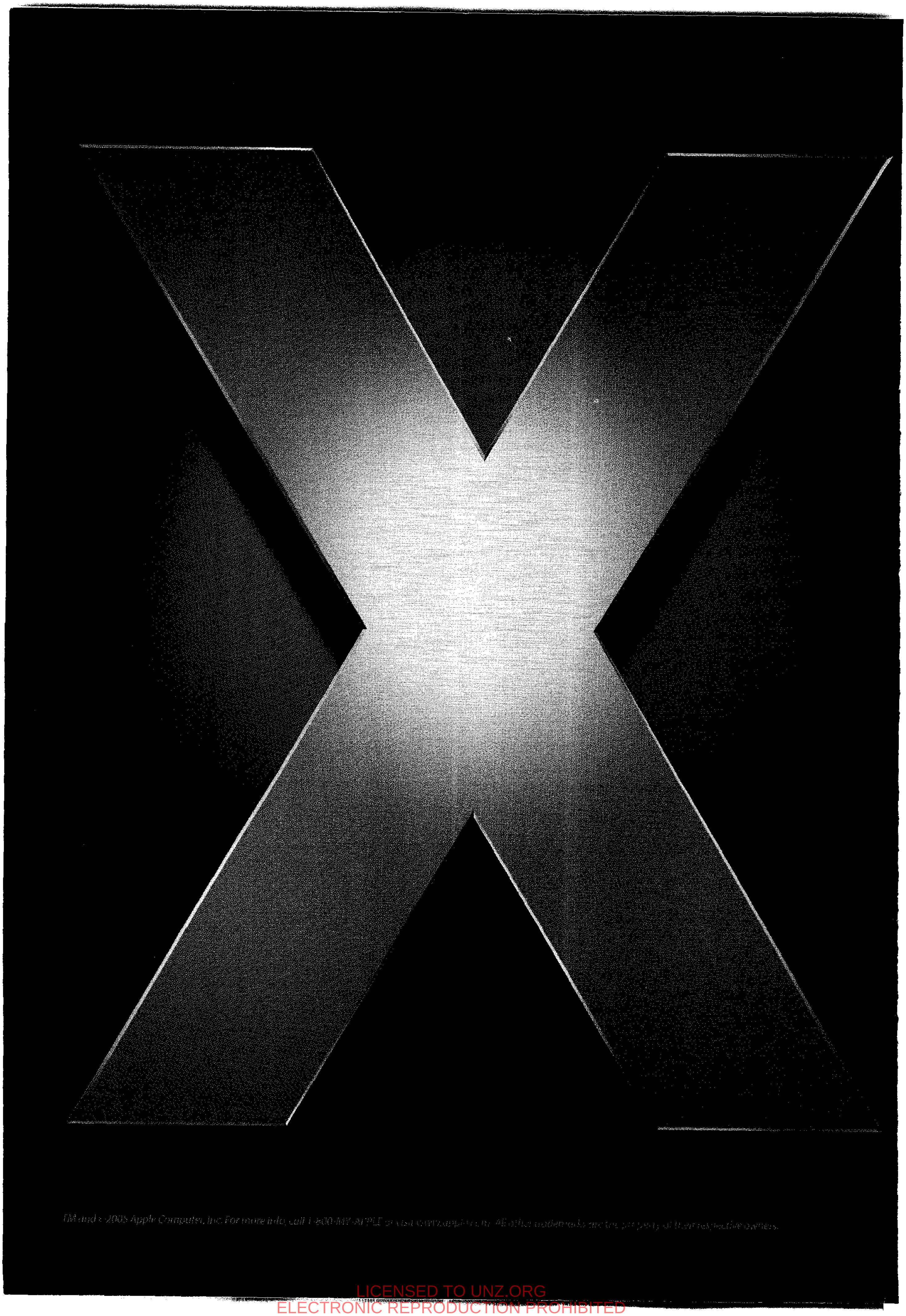

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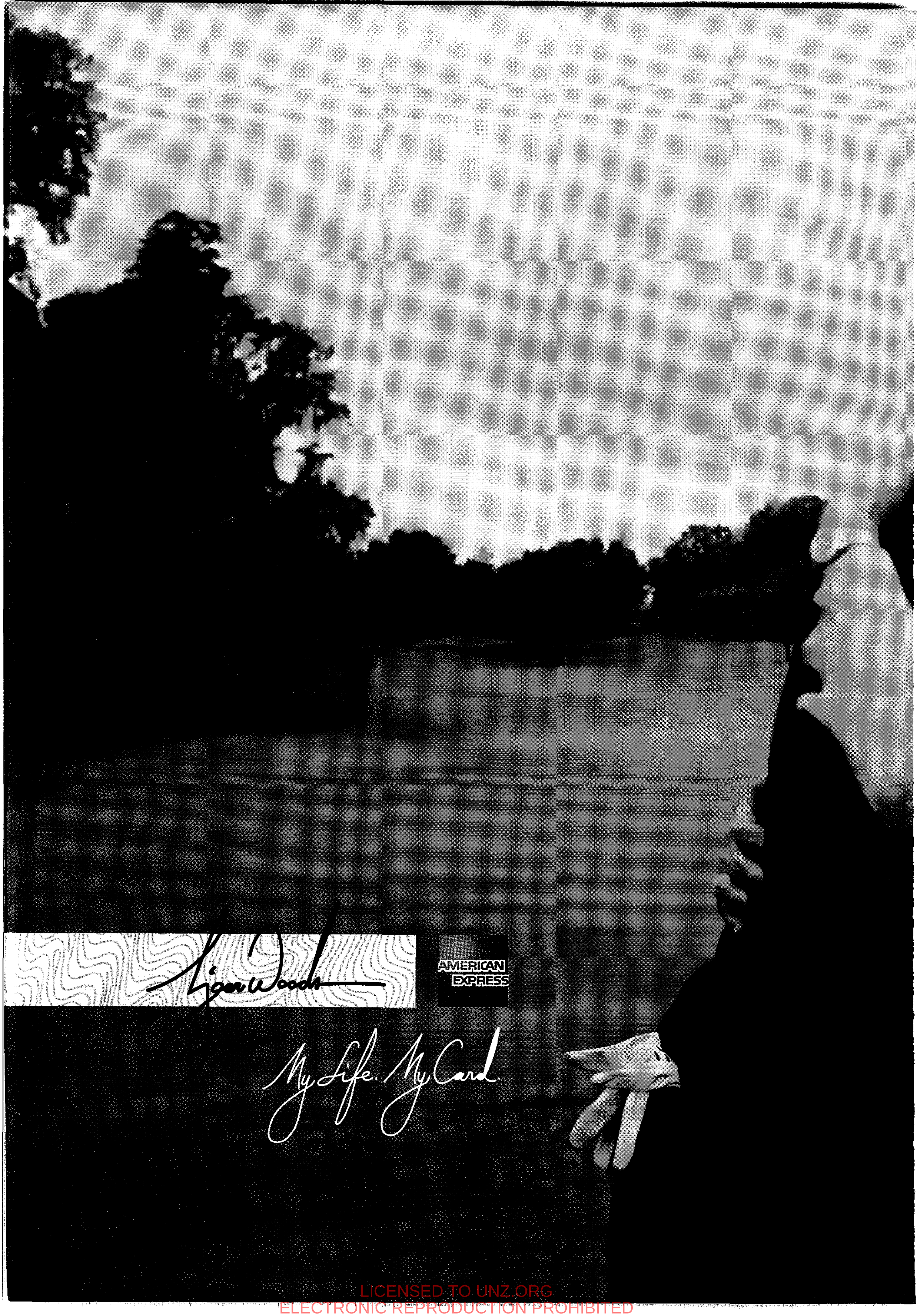
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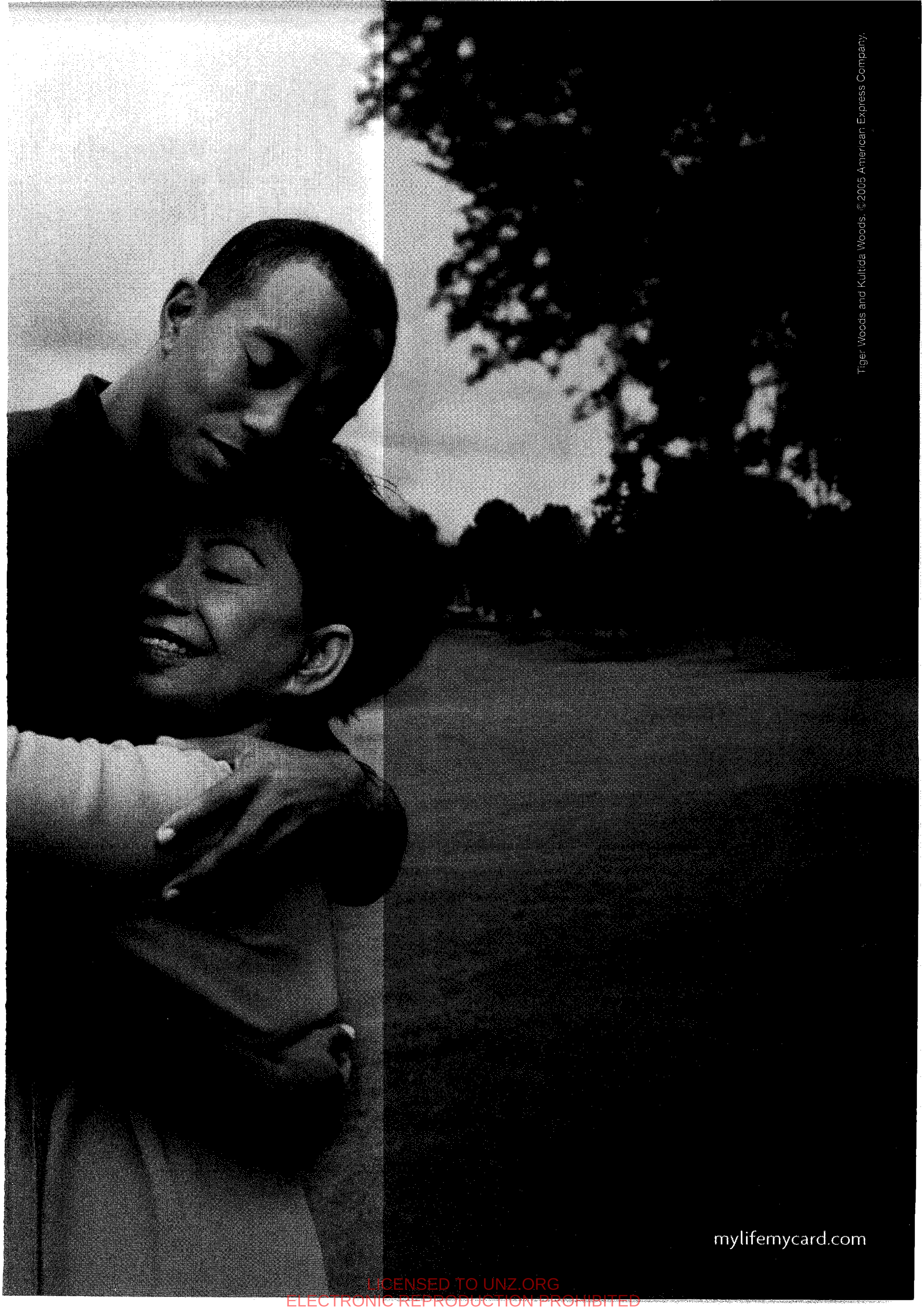
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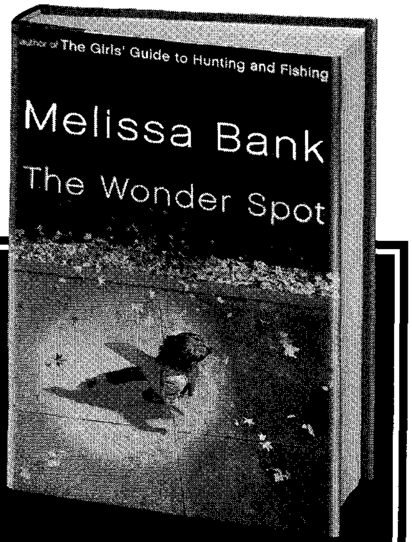

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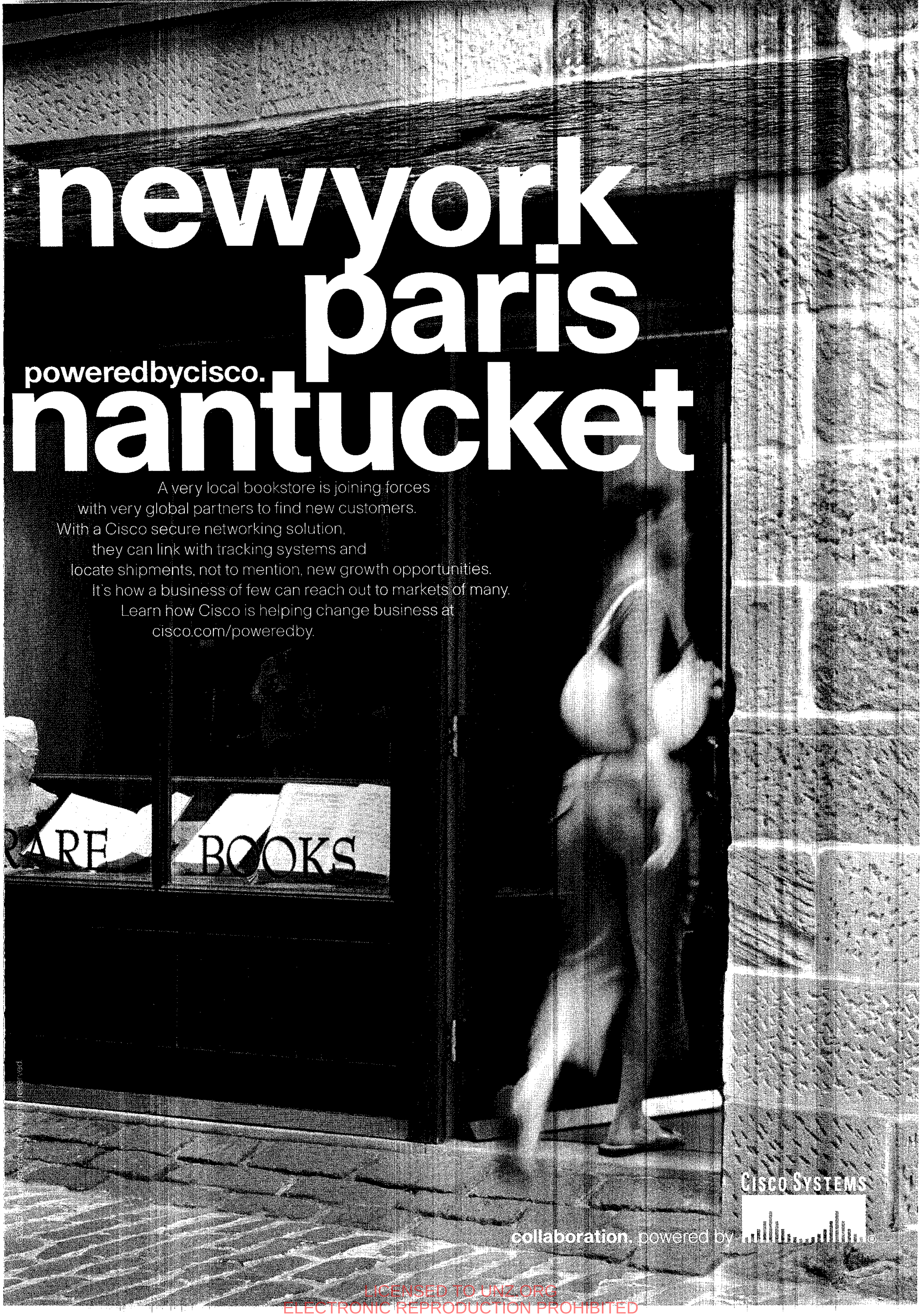
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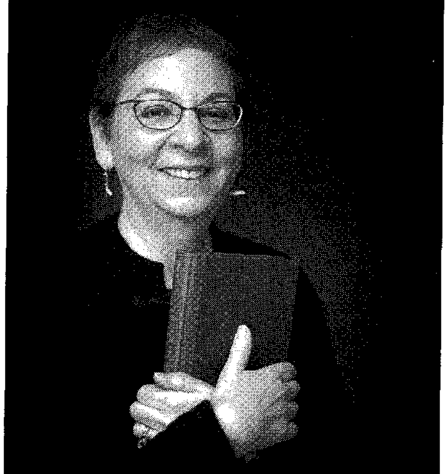

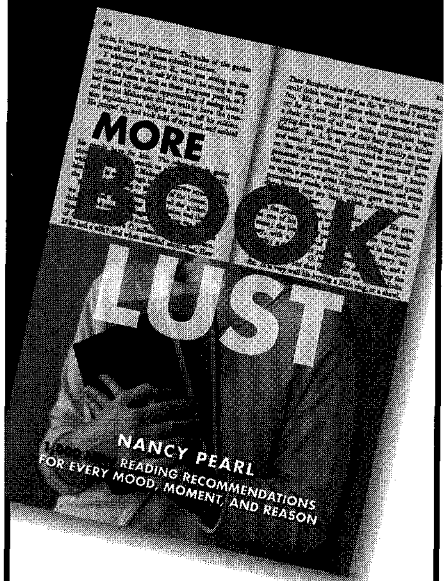

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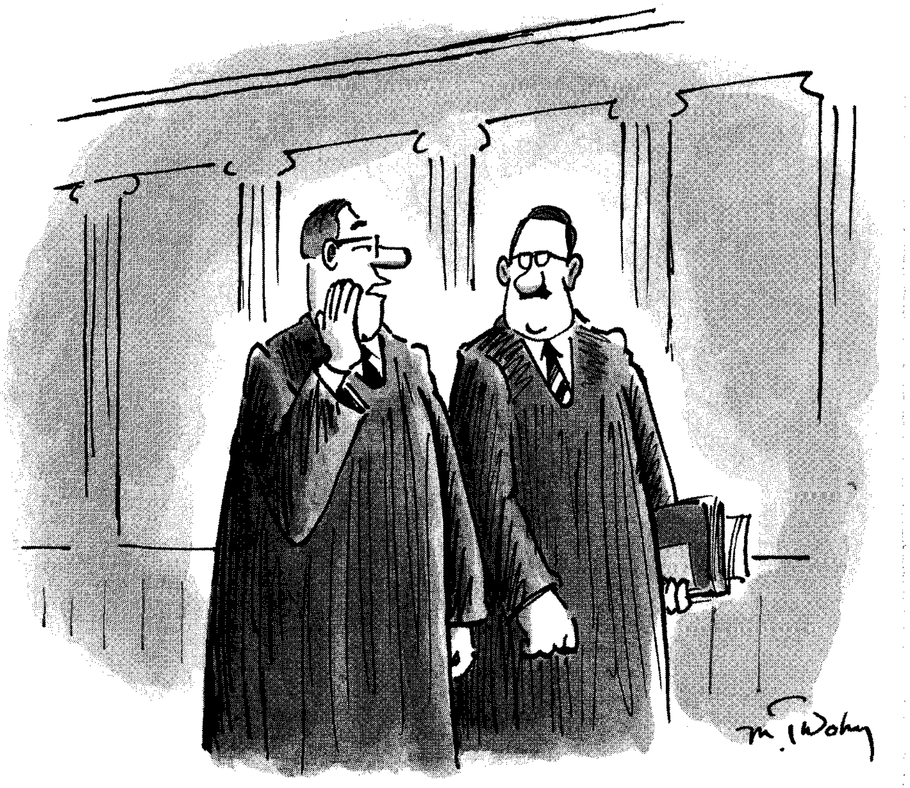
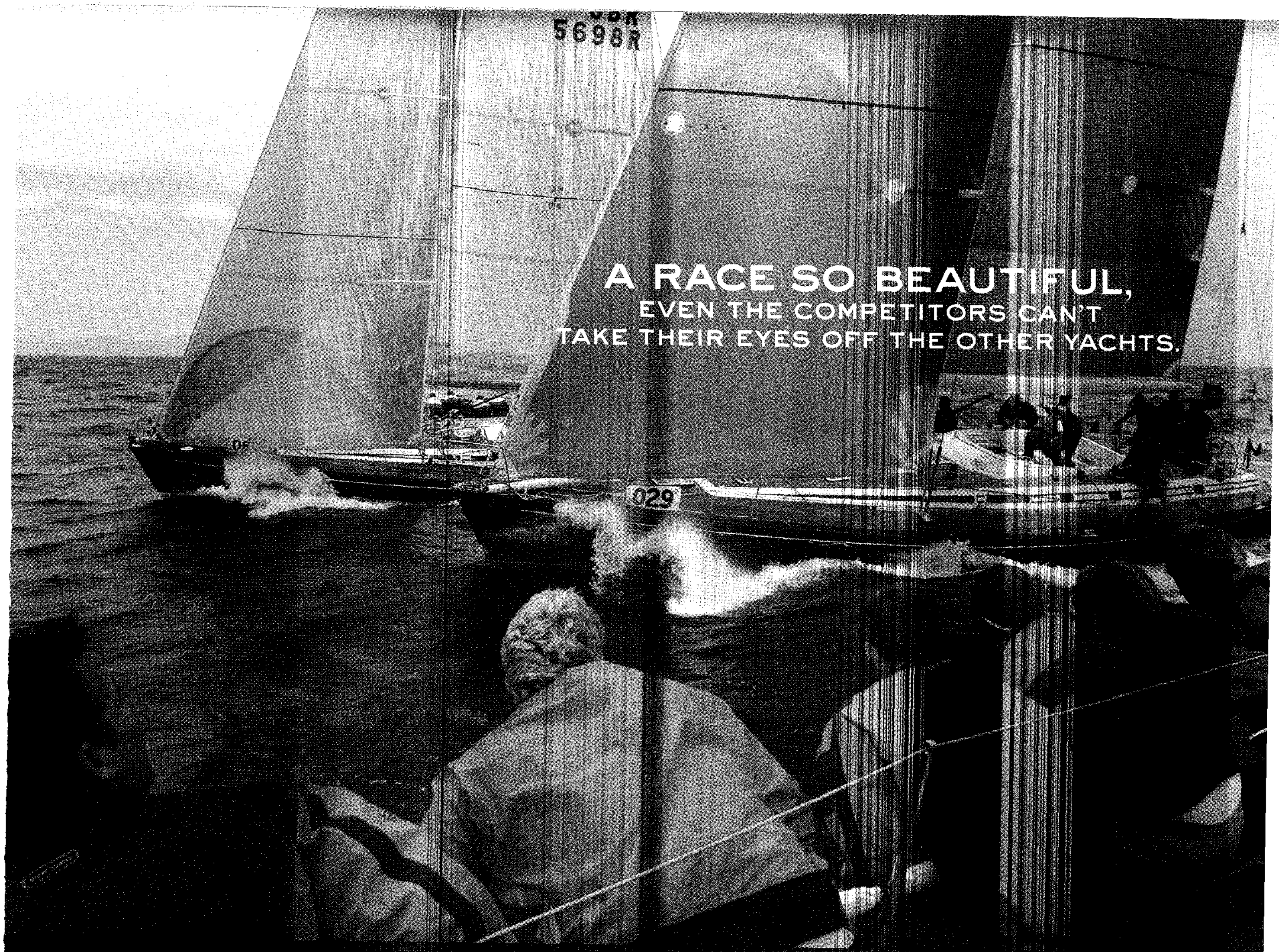


"I'm wearing my Ten Commandments boxers."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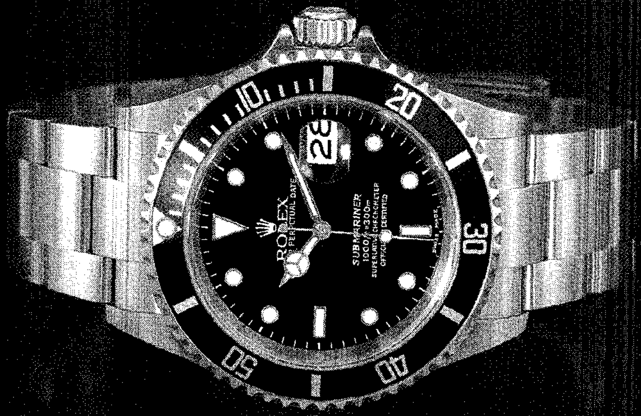
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THE MAIL

WAR WOUNDS

As an admirer of George Packer's writing from Iraq, I was somewhat baffled to find his condensed view of my work in a place where it did not seem quite to belong: a description of the distress of mind suffered by the family of Kurt Frosheiser ("The Home Front," July 4th). It is true that I published a book entitled "A Long Short War: The Postponed Liberation of Iraq" in 2003. The title, which proposes that the war with Saddam Hussein really began in 1991, is obviously not intended to suggest that our engagement with Iraq is or was short-term, so that Packer may not be as aphoristic as he would like to be in rephrasing it as "the short long war," which I had even proposed to my publishers as an alternative.

He goes further, in asserting that I was one of those who visited Iraq in the summer of 2003 "simply to reinforce their preconceptions." I have met Packer several times, but I don't think he knows me well enough to employ the word "simply" in that sentence. This was my fifth visit to Iraq, following two trips in the time of Saddam's "peace," and two voyages in time of war. I daresay that I had come to the conclusion that Iraq and the world would be better off without Saddam Hussein, but I don't know in what sense this conclusion could be sneered at as a "preconception." Packer has said several times that he takes the same view: I shall not denounce him for his "postconception." An open mind is not an empty mind.

As to what I saw when travelling with Paul Wolfowitz: the renownedly brilliant public relations of the Bush Administration could not have invented the genuine enthusiasm that I witnessed among Kurds, Sunnis, Shiites, and Marsh Arabs. Nor could it have faked the mass graves or the new boom in Baghdad newspapers, or conditioned my opinion that the "insurgent" forces are "the scum of the earth." I wrote then that there was a potential new Iraq under the rubble, and I always believed in the elections that the New York *Times*, for example, thought should be indefinitely postponed. There is a further innuendo in Packer's suggestion that I voiced this only to Fox News, since I told it to everybody, and I hope I do not complain only on my own behalf if I say that such an innuendo is slightly unworthy of *The New Yorker*.

Christopher Hitchens
Washington, D.C.

ALASKAN LANGUAGES

Elizabeth Kolbert's article about the demise of the Eyak language mentions a policy instituted by Sheldon Jackson, Alaska's earliest commissioner of education, that prohibited children from speaking indigenous languages at school ("Last Words," June 6th). As Kolbert says, the policy was not formally rescinded until 1972, but it should be noted that the policy had not been enforced for many years before that time. More fundamentally, although the policy naturally appears abhorrent from the point of view of contemporary cultural attitudes, it had its roots in the well-meaning sensitivities of another era. When Jackson arrived in Alaska, in the eighteen-seventies, few natives had English-language fluency; as a result, natives were denied many privileges of citizenship, such as the right to own land, or to vote. Jackson wanted full rights for natives, and started a school for their children in 1878; it was later renamed in his honor. I attended Sheldon Jackson High School from 1952 to 1956; students were not only allowed but often encouraged to speak their languages. Many of Alaska's native leaders and organizations emanated from this institution, now Sheldon Jackson College, which still has a native enrollment of thirty per cent.

Monte D. Wilson
Sheldon Jackson College Trustee
Potlatch, Idaho

•

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THIS WEEK

NIGHT LIFE
WYCLEF JEAN

Jean has long been a multicultural ambassador for hip-hop; like him, the Senegalese group Daara J (the name means "School of Life" in Wolof) takes a global approach to the music. The two acts join forces this week at Lincoln Center to explore hip-hop's African roots. (See page 16.)

ART
NATURAL VIEWS

The Horticultural Society of New York presents "Breaking Ground," a deeply satisfying exhibition of botanically themed art by thirty-nine artists. The work ranges from Ellsworth Kelly's pared-down stalks and buds to Gustavs Mergins's grass sandals and Jacqueline Lu's drawing based on the infestation patterns of Asian long-horned beetles. (See page 20.)

DANCE
SHEN WEI

The Chinese-born dance-maker's young company comes to the Lincoln Center Festival starting July 19 to present the world première of "Map," a surging minimalist piece set to Steve Reich's "The Desert Music," which features dancing that is neither balletic nor modern but is intended to reveal the beauty of natural movement. (See page 21.)

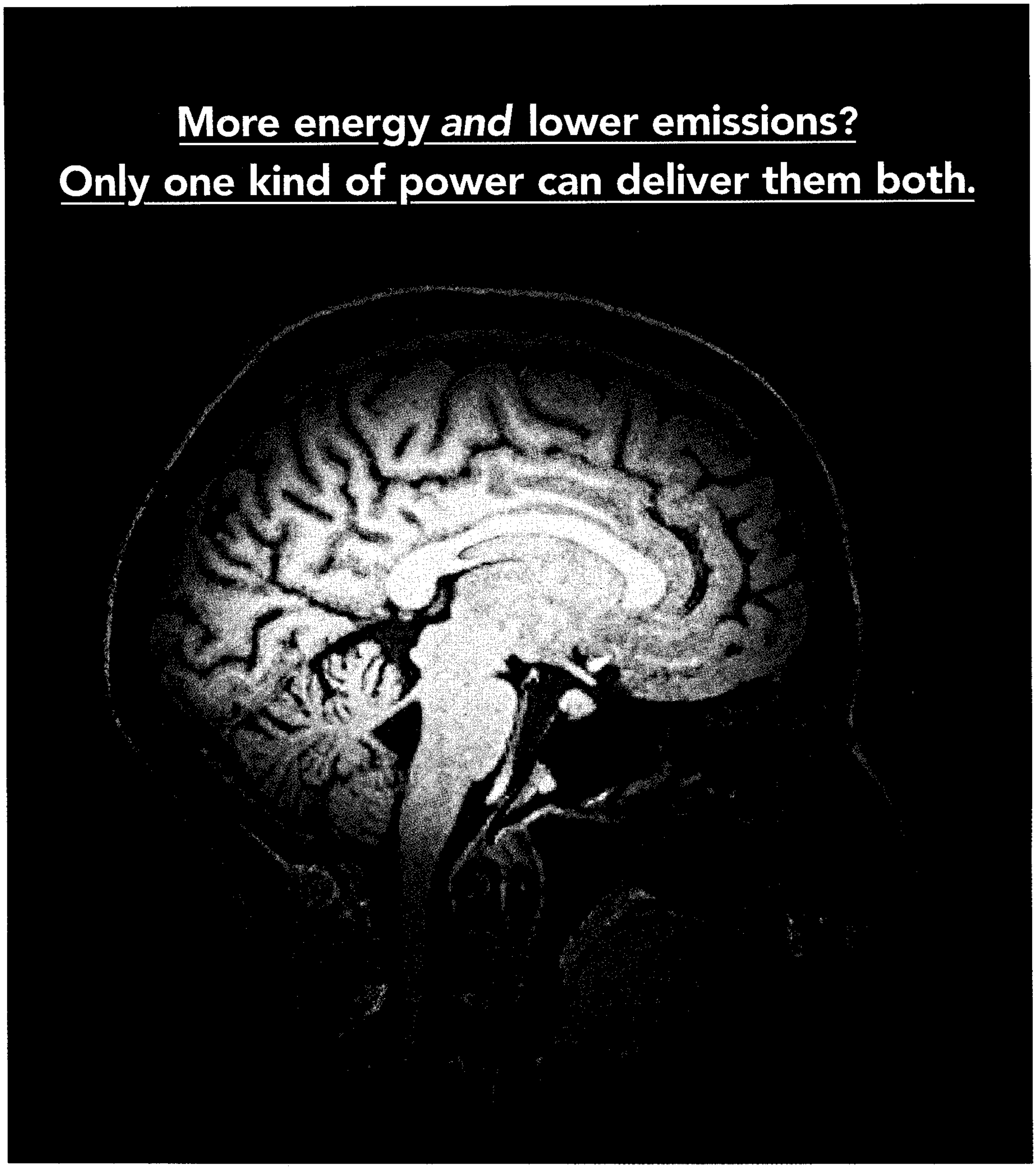
CLASSICAL MUSIC
MARLBORO FESTIVAL

The Marlboro Festival, in Vermont, the Northeast's summer shrine for chamber music (as performed by some of the world's leading artists and their very talented students), begins its annual round of concerts on July 16. Programs are not set in advance; they will be determined each week by the musicians. (See page 23.)

MOVIES
RAOUL WALSH

A retrospective of the director Walsh's films at the Museum of the Moving Image, which begins on July 9, will include the 1930 Western "The Big Trail," which features the twenty-two-year-old John Wayne in his first leading role, the 1932 Spencer Tracy wisecracker "Me and My Gal," and "The Roaring Twenties," the 1939 Humphrey Bogart–James Cagney gangster classic. (See page 28.)

Children playing at a Celebrate Brooklyn! concert. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
DANCING THE OCEAN

Merce Cunningham's dances look like nature, like what goes on in a field or a forest. This may be due to his iconoclastic compositional practices: the decentralized action, the letup on *will,* on here's-what-this-means. Nature is that way, too. But the creaturely look may also reflect Cunningham's own bodily habits. When he was a young dancer, critics said he moved like an animal, and in early photographs that's what he looks like: a faun, a satyr. In 1994, Cunningham unveiled his most ambitious nature dance, "Ocean," the last product of his fifty-year collaboration with John Cage. "Ocean" will be reprised starting July 12 at the Lincoln Center Festival, and it is an elaborate affair, in three concentric circles: the dance in the middle, the audience surrounding the dance, and the musicians surrounding the audience. The dancers are sometimes like the ocean—fluid, eddying—and sometimes, as in Cunningham's other work, like nature only in that they are wholly objective. The piece builds and then ebbs away, with no climax. Climaxes, he once said, are for those who get excited over New Year's Eve.

—*Joan Acocella*

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AS YOU LIKE IT
The Public Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park season begins with a production of the comedy, directed by Mark Lamos and starring Brian Bedford, Richard Thomas, James Waterston, Lynn Collins, and Jennifer Ikeda. In previews. Opens July 12 at 8. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-539-8750.)

LA BELLA DORMENTE NEL BOSCO
The master puppeteer Basil Twist reimagines Respighi's puppet opera from 1922, inspired by the fairy tale Sleeping Beauty. Twelve puppeteers are joined by opera soloists, a twenty-member chorus, and the Gotham Chamber Opera. Part of the Lincoln Center Festival 2005. July 12-16. For full festival schedule, visit www.lincolncenter.org. (John Jay Theatre, Tenth Ave. at 58th St. 212-721-6500.)

THE BLONDE IN THE THUNDERBIRD
Suzanne Somers, the television icon of the nineteen-seventies, brings her one-woman musical autobiography to Broadway. Previews begin July 8. Opens July 17. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

LE DERNIER CARAVANSÉRAIL (ODYSSÉES)
Ariane Mnouchkine's epic recounting of the real stories of modern-day refugees—Afghans, Kurds, Iranians, and others—searching for a sense of home. Created collectively by Le Théâtre du Soleil, with music by Jean-Jacques Lemêtre. Presented in two parts: "The Cruel River" and "Origins and Destinies." July 17-31. (Lincoln Center Festival, Damrosch Park. 212-721-6500.)

FATAL ATTRACTION: A GREEK TRAGEDY
Alana McNair and Kate Wilkinson's parody of the 1987 film uses lit-crit techniques and a Greek chorus to explore the movie's hidden messages. Directed by Timothy Haskell. In previews. Opens July 10 at 6. (East 13th Street Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200.)

ICE FACTORY FESTIVAL
The Soho Think Tank's twelfth annual showcase of new plays presents six New York premières over the course of six weeks, beginning with the SaBooge Theatre's quirky drama "Fathom," about a shell collector and a sickly boy in Tasmania, and Kevin Doyle's absurdist play about job anxiety, "The Position." July 6-Aug. 13. For festival schedule, visit www.sohothinktank.org. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 212-868-4444.)

LENNON
A musical portrait of the life and songs of John Lennon, sanctioned by Yoko Ono, comes to Broadway with a cast that features multiple Lennons, including Will Chase and Terrence Mann; Julie Danao-Salkin plays Yoko Ono. Written and directed by Don Scardino. Previews begin July 7. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

PRIMO
Antony Sher plays the Italian chemist and Holocaust survivor Primo Levi in the New York run of London's National Theatre production of this biographical drama, based on Levi's Auschwitz memoir "If This Is a Man." Previews begin July 8. Opens July 11 at 7. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE SKIN GAME
The Mint Theatre revives John Galsworthy's 1920 play about feuding neighbors. Eleanor Reissa directs. In previews. Opens July 10 at 7. (311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

SUMMER PLAY FESTIVAL
New work by sixteen playwrights from the United States and the United Kingdom comes to the Theatre Row multiplex in July. For a full schedule of shows, visit www.spfnyc.com. July 5-31. (410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

NOW PLAYING

BIRDIE BLUE
The indomitable S. Epatha Merkerson stars as Birdie, a strong black woman born and raised in Mississippi who emigrates north to pre-civil-rights-era Chicago, where she finds love, heartache, and new kinds of tolerance. Married to a kindhearted man named Jackson (Charles Weldon) and the mother of a son who is incarcerated during an episode of racial unrest following Martin Luther King's assassination (Billy Porter, who appears in a number of roles), Birdie is never at a loss for what to say or feel. She is hemmed in by economic and racial circumstances, but she is a survivor. Although the writer, Cheryl L. West, and the director, Seret Scott, rely too heavily on a rather saccharine ending, Merkerson is so convincing in the part that she transcends the weaknesses in the material. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422. Through July 17.)

BOOCOCK'S HOUSE OF BASEBALL
In his one-man comic monologue, the longtime Elevator Repair Service actor and writer Paul Boocock ponders the rules and legends of the national pastime and struggles to apply their redemptive lessons to current American politics. Directed by Mary Catherine Burke. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

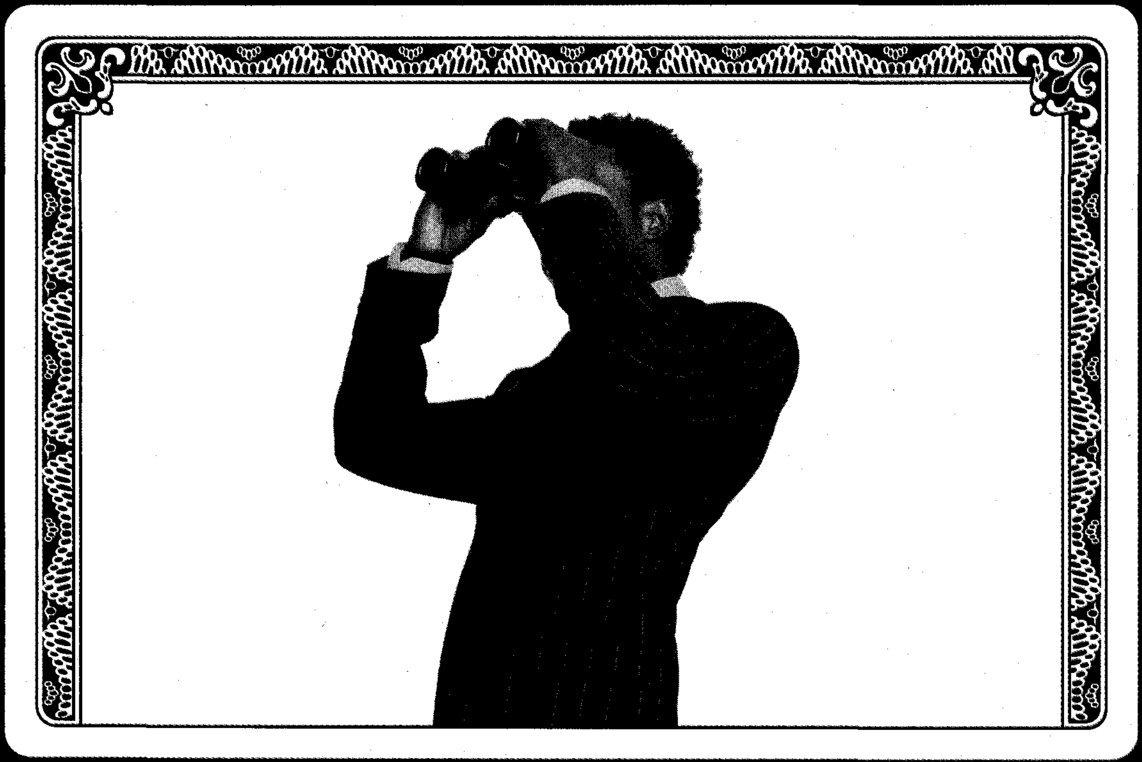
BORDER/CLASH: A LITANY OF DESIRES
Staceyann Chin, of Def Poetry Jam, delivers an arresting autobiography in verse, which travels from her Jamaican girlhood to her coming of age as a lesbian to her career in the United States as a writer and spoken-word artist. Though her story is charged with identity politics, she keeps her aggressive streak at a simmer, not a boil. Even at her most earnest, she has a breezy, disarming air, and she also has a gift that eludes many slam poets: the ability to laugh at herself. Directed by Rob Urbinati. (The Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

THE CONSTANT WIFE
In the Roundabout Theatre Company's splendid revival of W. Somerset Maugham's 1926 drawing-room comedy, Lynn Redgrave, wearing a dramatic veil, makes two striking entrances, playing the right and very honorable Mrs. Culver, a woman who is not afraid to speak her mind and who does so with élan. Kate Burton plays her daughter Constance, whose doctor husband of fifteen years (Michael Cumpsty) is having an affair with Marie-Louise (Kathryn Meisle)—Constance's best friend. To her mother's surprise, Constance has decided to condone *l'affaire* John and Marie-Louise and to achieve financial independence to make a feminist point. Or so it seems. "The Constant Wife" is Oscar Wilde lite, but no matter. Everything about this production is such a pleasure—from Allen Moyer's set design and Michael Krass's costumes to Mark Brokaw's impeccable direction—that the hackneyed plot and loopy logic barely register. Burton and Redgrave bring tremendous verve to their work, showing not only their proficiency in their craft but their joy in it. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/27/05.) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

DRUMSTRUCK
An interactive spectacle that provides each audience member with a two-foot-tall drum comes to Dodger Stages from South Africa, where it originated in a Johannesburg café nearly a decade ago. Directed by David Warren. (340 W. 50th St. 212-279-4200.)

FOOLS IN LOVE
Larger than life and twice as loud, this engaging, high-energy retooling of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream"—meant to appeal to children and adults—is set in a fifties diner, where jukebox hits are sung by a doo-wop group. The love-mad Helena and Hermia (in circle skirts and cardigans) are air-headed teenyboppers; their swains are "Grease"-style nerds. Ryan Knowles steals the show with his braying, rubber-limbed portrayal of the vainglorious Bottom. His thundering voice, relentless moue-making, and mammoth charisma are a cartoony cocktail of Jim Carrey and Snagglepuss, with a little speed thrown in. Directed by Sarah Rosenberg. (Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200.)

JEROEN KOOLHAAS



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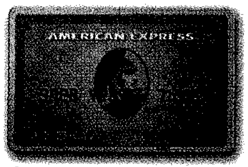


A WORLD OF SERVICE℠

THE HOLLOW MEN
The four-member British sketch-comedy team (familiar to watchers of Comedy Central) is now cracking wise at the Village Theatre. (159 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100. Through July 16.)

MANUSCRIPT
Paul Grellong's highbrow romp begins as a drawing-room comedy among hyperliterate Ivy Leaguers (their banter could come from Whit Stillman's "Metropolitan") but turns into a cold-blooded revenge drama when the aesthetes scrap over a stolen manuscript. With Jeffrey Carlson (channelling Ryan Phillippe) and Pablo Schreiber as childhood friends and Marin Ireland ("Sabina," "4:48 Psychosis") as a manipulative young novelist who comes between them. Directed by Bob Balaban. (Daryl Roth, 101 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE PARIS LETTER
This highly literate, delicately constructed play has much to recommend it: wonderful if somewhat mannered language by Jon Robin Baitz, clear-eyed direction by Doug Hughes, and an all-around-splendid cast. Ron Rifkin and John Glover play two longtime friends (and former lovers) who meet in middle age and argue about "truth," as one forsakes his homosexuality in favor of a more "normal" life. But the play's parts do not add up to a great sum, and the fault lies with the script. Baitz has poured a great deal of wit and thought into a story that ends up being the merest of melodramas. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

SWIMMING IN THE SHALLOWS
Logan Marshall-Green, of "The O.C.," stars in a new play by Adam Bock, about friends who commiserate at the local aquarium about their love troubles. Trip Cullman directs. Part of the Second Stage Theatre Uptown summer series. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 212-246-4422.)

TWELFTH NIGHT
The Aquila Theatre Company presents a ten-week run of the Shakespeare comedy, conceived and directed by Peter Meineck and Robert Richmond and featuring original music by Anthony Cochrane. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Ave., between 24th and 25th Sts. 212-279-4200.)

THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE
The wracking tension of spelling-bee competition is turned into rollicking ironic fun in this musical by William Finn ("Falsettos") and Rachel Sheinkin, in which each speller hams up the role of a different school-yard stereotype. Directed by James Lapine. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 212-239-6200.)

Also Playing

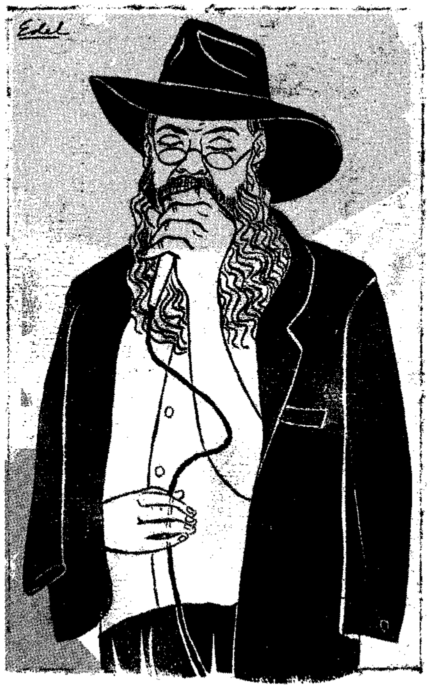
ALL SHOOK UP: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100. **ALTAR BOYZ:** Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BEAST ON THE MOON:** Century Center for the Performing Arts, 111 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG:** Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100. **DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DOUBT:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **FIDDLER ON THE ROOF:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100. **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY:** 47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS:** Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **LAZER VAUDEVILLE:** Lamb's Theatre, 130 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **ORSON'S SHADOW:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **THE PILLOWMAN:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **STEEL MAGNOLIAS:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **SWEET CHARITY:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE TALK OF THE TOWN:** Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. 212-840-6800. **THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING):** DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?:** Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—July 14: **Lucinda Williams** incorporates a wide range of musical styles into her repertoire—from folk to blues to country to rock. It's a restlessness that's served the Louisiana native well. Her latest record is a two-disk live set.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—July 13: The veteran sideman **Al Kooper** (that's his organ solo in Bob Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone") breaks out songs from "Black Coffee," his first solo album in three decades. July 18: The Jamaican baritone **Luciano** is one of a handful of singers who in the past decade have wrapped the classical rhythms of old-fashioned roots reggae around beats influenced by the interceding years of up-tempo music. His lyrics focus on spirituality and social consciousness—a departure from the guns and sex that dominate contemporary Jamaican music.



The Hasidic hip-hop and reggae singer Matisyahu, at Reggae Carifest.

LA BELLE ÉPOQUE
827 Broadway, at 13th St. (212-254-6436)—July 8: **Beausoleil.** The Cajun fiddler Michael Doucet and his band offer a night of steamy Louisiana grooves.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—July 6: The Algerian rocker **Rachid Taha.** July 12: Jay Farrar left the alt-country avatars Uncle Tupelo some ten years ago, but he kept the backcountry faith with his outfit **Son Volt** (his former bandmate Jeff Tweedy started Wilco and headed for the pop charts—but that's another story). Son Volt released three albums in the late nineties before Farrar embarked on a solo career. Now the band is back with its first studio album in seven years, "Okemah and the Melody of Riot."

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!
Prospect Park Band Shell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. (718-855-7882, ext. 45)—July 8: Hop-Fu is the killer combination of a kung-fu movie with live hip-hop. Here, the d.j.s **IXL** and **Excess,** of the Kolabz Crew, perform during a screening of Sammo Hung's 1982 film, "Prodigal Son." **Illstyle** and **Peace Productions** open the proceedings with their break dancing. July 9: The musical antics of **Polygraph Lounge.**

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. (212-360-2777)—**Gabriel o Pensador** comes from Brazil, a country with many fierce indigenous musical genres, but the rapper's influences are American. His countercultural style uses early New York lyrical flow (à la Chuck D) and P-Funk-inspired rock. On July 8 he kicks off a Brazilian film festival. July 14: **Dinosaur Jr.,** the recently reunited seminal alternative trio, headlines a benefit concert for this mostly free music series. The band made its name some fifteen years ago with a high-volume guitar squall; this show is bound to rattle windows on both sides of the Park.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—July 7: **Digable Planets.** After a nearly nine-year hiatus, the trio famous for its combination of hip-hop and jazz returns. Doodlebug, Butterfly, and Ladybug created an unmistakable sound in 1993 with their début album, "Reachin' (A New Refutation of Time and Space)," and they won a Grammy for the hit single "Rebirth of Slick (Cool Like Dat)." Expect airy rhymes over a fusion of string-and-piano samples and a snare beat. With the underground m.c. **J-Live,** who has recorded with Prince Paul and other hip-hop luminaries.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—July 14: The sharp-eyed Southern-gothic singer-songwriter **Jim White.**

KEYSPAN PARK
1904 Surf Ave., Coney Island, Brooklyn (212-307-7171)—July 9: The Canadian pop singer **Bryan Adams** and the British heavy-metal act **Def Leppard** might seem like an odd double bill, but they have a common link in the superproducer Robert (Mutt) Lange, who helped turn both acts into mainstream radio stalwarts with his knack for hook-heavy studio polish.

LINCOLN CENTER FESTIVAL
Wyclef Jean delivers the urban trifecta of dancehall, hip-hop, and R. & B. He has yet to match the success of "The Score," the 1996 album he created with the Fugees, but Wyclef has lent his silky voice to several solo albums, the most recent of which is "Welcome to Haiti: Creole 101." Also performing is **Daara J,** a trio of Senegalese m.c.s who rap in multiple languages and who blend pan-African beats with hip-hop and other urban sounds. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. July 14.)

MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-653-1703)—July 14: **Dungen,** the brainchild of a precocious multi-instrumentalist named Gustav Ejstes, is a Swedish outfit specializing in eclectic psychedelic rock. The soaring arrangements, epic reach, and indecipherable lyrics could easily make them the new Sigur Rós.

"MIDSUMMER NIGHT SWING"
Fountain Plaza, Lincoln Center (212-721-6500)—The alfresco dancing continues on July 5 with the rockabilly of **Rosie Flores** (who will be joined by the legendary **Wanda Jackson**), followed by the hot salsa of **La Excelencia** (July 6), the traditional Irish music of **Bohola** (July 7), the small-band swing of **Blue Sky 5** (July 8), **Héctor Del Curto's Eternal Tango Orchestra** (July 9), the steamy sounds of **Hot Club of New Orleans** and the **New Orleans Nightcrawlers** (July 12), the organ grooves of **Swingadelic!** (July 13), a Bastille Day celebration with the *musette,* Gypsy swing, and rumba of the **Café Accordion Orchestra** (July 14) and the *son,* mambo, and bolero of **Quimbombó** (July 15). The series ends on July 16 with a tribute to Illinois Jacquet, featuring **Clark Terry, Jimmy Heath,** and **Barry Harris.**

169 BAR
169 East Broadway (212-473-8866)—July 11: **Hockey Night.** Two guitars and two drums compound the pleasure of this group from Minneapolis/St. Paul. Their rough-hewn indie rock has a twist—those twin guitars keep reaching into the canon of classic rock to appropriate the hooks of many great radio hits.

RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL
Sixth Ave. at 50th St. (212-247-4777)—July 13: Last year, **Carole King** hit the road, bringing along all her old favorites and performing them backed

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FROM THE CREATOR OF "THE OPPOSITE OF SEX"
TOM ARNOLD
JESSE BRADFORD
BOBBY CANNAVALE
STEVE COOGAN
LAURA DERN
LISA KUDROW
JASON RITTER
AND
MAGGIE GYLLENHAAL
HAPPY ENDINGS
EVERYBODY WANTS ONE

Just when you thought you knew everything about love and dysfunction, along comes **HAPPY ENDINGS**, Lions Gate Films' hilarious and heartfelt new comedy by writer/director Don Roos (The Opposite of Sex). Featuring a talented ensemble cast that includes Tom Arnold, Jesse Bradford, Bobby Cannavale, Sarah Clarke, Steve Coogan, Laura Dern, Lisa Kudrow, Jason Ritter, David Sutcliffe and Maggie Gyllenhaal, **HAPPY ENDINGS** deftly weaves together multiple stories to create a sharp, witty look at love, family and the sheer unpredictability of life itself. A feast of buried secrets, missed opportunities and welcome second chances, this wildly original comedy proves that the happiest ending of all is the one you least expect.

HAPPY ENDINGS was the opening night film at this year's Sundance Film Festival.
See it in select cities starting July 15th and nationwide on July 29th. Check your local listings.

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by acoustic musicians on a stage set that included a couch, a chair, and a coffee table. That series of shows, called the Living Room Tour, didn't include New York City, but this time King's performing here in support of her new live album, for the first time in a dozen years.

REGGAE CARIFEST
A *Who's Who* of au-courant Caribbean singers and d.j.s descends upon Randall's Island for the day. **Buju Banton,** a favorite Rastafarian dancehall d.j., **Matisyahu,** a local Hasid who combines hip-hop and roots reggae, **Bounty Killer,** known for lacing his hard-edged dancehall with rude-boy lyrics, and **Luciano** (see the B. B. King Blues Club & Grill) are among the headliners. The festival includes nearly two dozen performers in total, along with plenty of West Indian food and many opportunities for dancing. (For more information, call 718-856-3336, or visit www.reggaecarifest.com. July 10.)

SIREN FESTIVAL
The Austin, Texas, combo **Spoon,** the husband-and wife organ-and-drum duo **Mates of State,** the power-popster **Brendan Benson,** the dance-rockers **VHS or Beta, Dungen** (see Maxwell's), and many other indie bands make waves at this free daylong beachside gathering. (W. 10th St. at the boardwalk and Stillwell Ave. at the boardwalk, in Coney Island. For more information, visit www.villagevoice.com/siren. July 16.)

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—July 13: The local modern rockers in the **Bravery** have three badges of stardom: a hit record (their self-titled début), a single all over the radio (the catchy "An Honest Mistake"), and a sizable backlash (they're unfairly despised by New York hipsters). July 14: The snappy pop of the Canadian twin sisters **Tegan & Sara.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

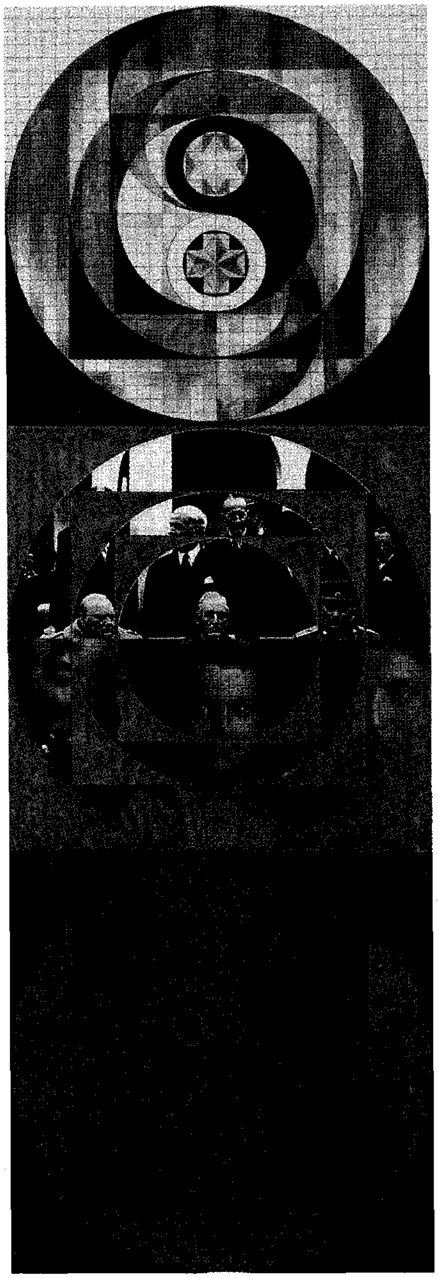
BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—July 7-10: As **Harvey Mason** demonstrated on last year's splendid album "With All My Heart," the drummer—best known for his work with the smooth-jazz quartet Fourplay—finds his inner artist when fronting a piano trio, which is the case here. July 12-17: The super-trumpeter **Maynard Ferguson** pulls in with his loud and proud Big Bob Nouveau Band.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—July 12-17: "Steppin' with T.P." salutes the late Tito Puente, whose formidable bands were once the place for Latin and jazz idioms to cohabitate. The pianist **Hilton Ruiz,** the vibraphonist **Jay Hoggard,** the trumpeter **Lew Soloff,** and the saxophonist **Lew Tabackin** do the honors.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—July 7-10: The saxophonist **Bud Shank,** a West Coast cool-jazz legend now intent on exhibiting his passion and agility as a hardcore bebopper. He's backed by the pianist **Bill May** and his marvellous trio. July 15-17: The **Eddie Gomez** band. Following his career-making association with the pianist Bill Evans in the sixties and seventies, the bassist has beat his own idiosyncratic path, working with the fusion-esque band Steps Ahead and, more recently, redoing "Fiddler on the Roof."

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—The impressive young neo-bop trumpeter **Jeremy Pelt** stops by with his quartet July 7-10 to celebrate the release of his new CD, "Identity." July 13-14: The pianist **Joey Calderazzo** takes a holiday from his regular gig, with Branford Marsalis's band, to front his own trio. July 15-17: The vocalist **Rebecca Parris.**

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—The pianist **Eric Reed** is here July 5-10, backed by the bassist **Buster Williams** and the drummer **Victor Lewis.** The following week, July 12-17, Williams steps out with his own quartet. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.



Vitaly Komar's "Big Red Moustache," on view at Feldman through July 29.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—**"All the Mighty World: The Photographs of Roger Fenton, 1852-1860."** Through Aug. 21. ♦ **"Matisse: The Fabric of Dreams, His Art and His Textiles"** pairs swatches from the artist's collection of fabrics with some seventy-five paintings, drawings, prints, and collages. Through Sept. 25. ♦ **"Tony Oursler at the Met: 'Studio' and 'Climaxed.'"** Through Sept. 18. ♦ **"Chanel,"** a retrospective of designs from the couture house. Through Aug. 7. ♦ **"John Townsend: Newport Cabinetmaker"** presents a few dozen pieces by a prominent Colonial American furniture-maker alongside work by his contemporaries. Through Sept. 25. ♦ **"Sol LeWitt on the Roof: Splotches, Whirls, and Twirls."** A summer installation in the roof garden of five spiky stalagmite sculptures and a wall drawing. Through Oct. 30. ♦ **"Max Ernst: A Retrospective."** Some hundred and eighty paintings, drawings, sculptures, collages, and illustrated books by the restlessly creative artist (1891-1976). Through July 10. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Pioneering Modern Painting: Cézanne and Pissarro, 1865-1885."** Through Sept. 12. ♦ **"Friedlander,"** a major retrospective of the work of the photographer Lee Friedlander (born 1934). Through Aug. 29. ♦ **"The High Line"** details Field Operations and Diller Scofidio & Renfro's ambitious urban rails-to-trails scheme for the abandoned elevated tracks that run along the West Side from Gansevoort to Thirty-fourth Street. Through Oct. 31. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Robert Mapplethorpe and the Classical Tradition: Photographs and Mannerist Prints."** An exhibition that harmonizes Mapplethorpe's classically posed, erotically charged photographs with stylized, sophisticated sixteenth-century Flemish Mannerist prints. Through Aug. 24. ♦ **"Oteiza: Myth and Modernism."** A retrospective of sculpture, drawing, and collage by the Basque artist Jorge Oteiza (1908-2003). Through Aug. 24. ♦ **"Art of Tomorrow: Hilla Rebay and Solomon R. Guggenheim."** Through Aug. 10. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—**"Robert Smithson,"** a retrospective of drawings, constructions, and collages, includes filmed, photographed, and sketched documentation of the iconic "Spiral Jetty." Through Oct. 23. ♦ **"Remote Viewing: Invented Worlds in Recent Painting and Drawing"** includes work by Terry Winters, Julie Mehretu, Carroll Dunham, and Matthew Ritchie, among others. Through Oct. 9. ♦ The eclectic gathering of works from the permanent collection in **"Landscape"** ranges from Jasper Johns's white maps to Ed Ruscha's rows of L.A. streets to Roni Horn's eerie comparison of the body and the earth, "Becoming a Landscape" (1999-2001). Through Sept. 18. ♦ A high-tech dream image, Banks Violette's untitled installation gives us the burnt-out skeleton of a church or a barn rendered in cast bonded salt; the look is like that of marble, or Styrofoam, or bone. Standing at not quite full scale, the weirdly white uprights and rafters reflect faintly against their shiny black platform, and a chilly, echoing drone plays in the background. It's like the set for an experimental opera, which is not surprising given that Violette is apparently inspired by the musical subgenre of Scandinavian black metal—but any instinctive goth-romance association will match the mood. Through Oct. 2. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—Claude Monet did two major stints in London: one as a Franco-Prussian War refugee (1870-71) and, much later, as a famous artist (1899-1901). Results of the latter are on display in **"Monet's London: Artists' Reflections on the Thames 1859-1914,"** including his signature melting views of the Waterloo and Charing Cross Bridges painted from his balcony at the Savoy Hotel and the Houses of Parliament from St. Thomas's Hospital (a vantage point secured for him by the American painter John Singer Sargent). Otherwise, it's everyone's London, from Whistler, represented by his "Thames Set" etchings (1859-1860), to Winslow Homer and Childe Hassam. The American Joseph Pennell (1857-1926) receives ample wall space, alongside stereographic photos of monuments by the famous tidal river and André Derain's Fauvist festival of color "London Bridge" (1906), on loan from the Modern. Through Sept. 4. ♦ **"Michelangelo of the Menagerie: Bronze Works by Antoine-Louis Barye."** Through July 24. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

CHELSEA ART MUSEUM
556 W. 22nd St. (212-255-0719)—Eighty diminutive etchings from an original 1799 print run of Francisco Goya's **"Los Caprichos"** are interspersed with a show of contemporary work, **"Here Comes the Bogey-Man."** Through Sept.

24. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

DRAWING CENTER

35 Wooster St. (212-219-2166)—Seven artists use the walls and floor for **"Wall-to-Wall Drawing: Selections Summer 2005."** Sun K. Kwak's calligraphic swoops, somewhat slight on their own, successfully mesh with Shoshana Dentz's sharply abstracted brown-and-gray fence and Mark Licari's doodled machine that suggests Rube Goldberg by way of R. Crumb. Rosana Castrillo Diaz's admirably simple pencil outline of a book, nearly invisible at actual size, counterpoints the entries that interpret the concept of drawing more loosely: Avantika Bawa's eye-teaser of painted shadows and planar cardboard reliefs, Chris Sauter's star field of holes cut right through the drywall, and Charbel Ackermann's deadly unserious PowerPoint projection mapping the Axis of Evil. Through July 30. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 6, and Saturdays 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION

1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"From Callot to Greuze: French Drawings from Weimar."** Through Aug. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-873-3400)—The Society's collection of Hudson River School painters serves as the core of **"Nature and the American Vision,"** but other nineteenth-century landscapes displayed here stretch far beyond the tristate area to Yosemite, Europe, South America, and the Arctic. Hudson River School stalwarts like George Innes, Asher Brown Durand, and Thomas Cole paint great stops on the American Grand Tour (e.g., Lake George, the Catskills, and the Adirondacks), as well as bucolic and majestic views of New York's great river. There are also examples of Staffordshire pottery transfer-printed with scenes of mountains and waterfalls and Wade & Croome's folding twelve-foot "Panorama of the Hudson River" (1847), a wonderfully graphic mapping of the river from the tip of Manhattan to Lansingburgh, just above Troy. Through Feb. 5, 2006. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6.)

P.S.1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER

22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"Greater New York 2005"** collects work by more than a hundred and sixty artists from around the city who have emerged in the past five years. Through Sept. 26. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

ELIZABETH HEYERT

Isaiah Owens, the director of a Harlem funeral parlor whose motto is "Where Beauty Softens Your Grief," thinks of the transition into the hereafter as "going to the party," so the corpses that pass through his establishment are always splendidly turned out. But Owens's theatrical touch doesn't stop at Sunday-best costuming; he also crafts a beatific expression on every embalmed face. Heyert's postmortem photographs record Owens's handiwork from the point of view of a mourner peering into a coffin from above, adding artifice of her own: a black cloth that isolates each figure in a velvety void. Every body here has a startlingly vivacious presence. Through July 23. (Houk, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-750-7070.)

"BREAKING GROUND"

The Horticultural Society of New York provides one of the city's stranger venues for art viewing, a sort of shabby-genteel library with stained gray carpet and musty bookshelves. The show itself is inspired, however, pairing art by known quantities like Ellsworth Kelly—represented by two lovely lithographs of leaves and a fig branch—with specimens from the emerging crowd. Ethan Vogt's grid of photos showcases suburban shrubbery ranging from scruffy to sculptural to phallic, Kyle Wadsworth's hilarious "Carrying Case for a Domestic Plant" looks like a fibreglass tuba case, and David Melrose's piece—weekly deliveries of bouquets to the curator (Jodie Vicenta Jacobson, also his sweetheart)—is the most candid art-world kiss-up of the season. Through Sept. 9. (128 W. 58th St. 212-757-0915, ext. 113.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

KUMA / MADE WIANTA

The contrasting work of two artists, one from Japan and one from Bali, serves as the catalyst for an exploration of art and globalization, modernism outside the West, and the concept of earthly paradise. Kuma, the Japanese artist, uses steel, glass, and cardboard to create muscular sculptures whose elements bind, thrust, and penetrate; Made Wianta, the Balinese, makes poetic, ethereal work from rice, bamboo, and delicate pen-and-ink on paper. It's fairly obvious who represents paradise and who the industrialized world. For Robert C. Morgan, the curator who discovered them at the Venice Biennale in 2003 and brought them together here, their art is "about expressing a self-made reality," but, paired like this, they seem straightforwardly yin and yang. Through Aug. 6. (Weiss, 520 W. 24th St. 212-691-6899.)

LIU ZHENG

From 1994 to 2000, Liu travelled throughout China, photographing his countrymen. Forty-six of the extraordinary portraits he brought back are included in "The Chinese," his first American solo show, the best of them recalling the confrontational ardor and subversive wit of Arbus, Araki, and Peter Hujar. Because Liu's miners, mourners, strippers, actors, transsexuals, businessmen, beggars, convicts, and priests inhabit his square black-and-white prints with a vividness that never feels strained, his decidedly unofficial portraits have the power of revelation. Through Aug. 26. (Milo, 525 W. 25th St. 212-414-0370.)

"THE PHOTOGRAPH IN QUESTION"

This savvy survey of contemporary photography needs far more explanation than most viewers are prepared to absorb, but no matter. Even if you're not quite sure what you're looking at, you can't help but be engaged. Vik Muniz, Thomas Demand, Orit Raff, Marco Breuer, Liz Deschenes, Roger Newton, and nearly twenty others question the nature and function of the medium, often by photographing the unphotographable. Erik Hanson records the aura of a David Bowie album. James Welling snatches pure color out of the air. And Richard Galpin peels the emulsion off an image of urban façades to create an architecture all his own. Through July 29. (Von Lintel, 555 W. 25th St. 212-242-0599.)

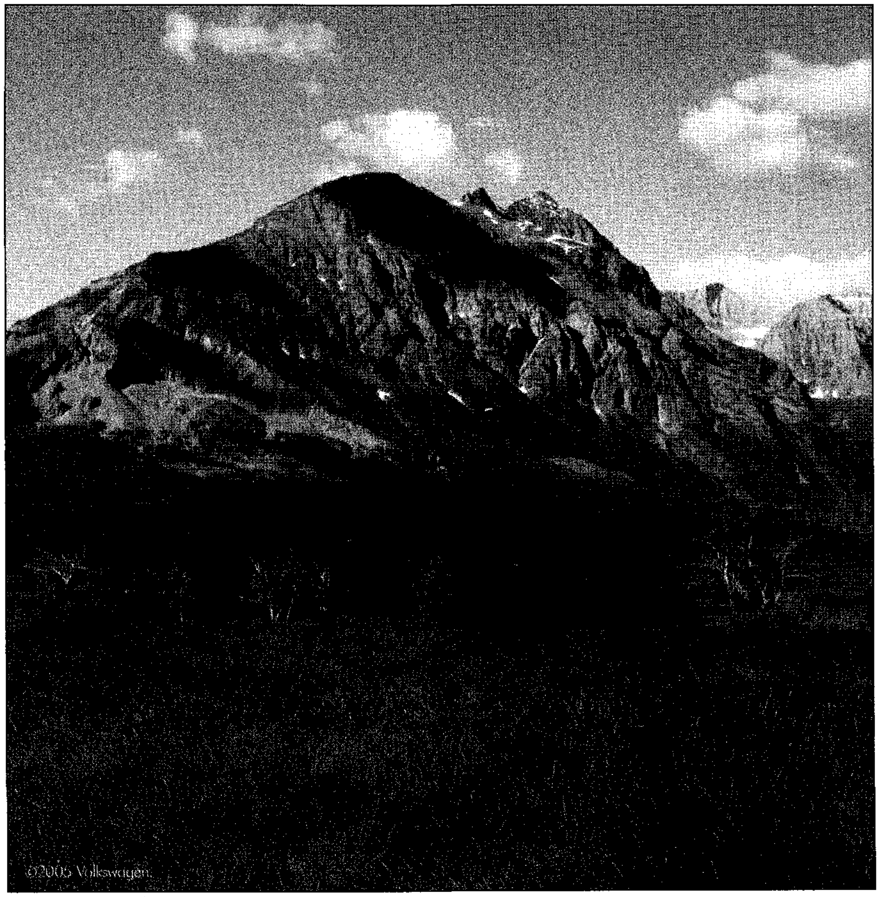
"RIPE FOR PICKING: FRUIT & FLOWERS"

This inoffensive show sticks to its mandate, showing fruits and flowers in ways that won't tax imaginations gone limp in the summer heat. On the blue-chip end of the spectrum are Ellsworth Kelly's "Daffodil" and "Wild Grape Leaves" lithographs (selections from the series are also up at the Horticultural Society) and Jeff Koons's offset lithograph of an inflatable flower and bunny. Polly Apfelbaum's woodblock monoprints offer a flower pattern as bold and fun as the ones found on Marimekko sheets. The wackiest entry is Vik Muniz's "Sunflowers (After Van Gogh)," a photo-recreation of one of the Post-Impressionist master's still-lifes, which, given the scope of Muniz's oeuvre, isn't very outré at all. Through July 23. (Kempner, 501 W. 23rd St. 212-206-6872.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

MIKE BOUCHET

Walter De Maria's "Earth Room," that icon of earthworks installation art on permanent view at Dia in SoHo, is united with unexpected themes in this scrappy ensemble. For "New York Dirty Room,"



Bouchet has, like De Maria, carpeted a room with several feet of dirt (his is a mixture of topsoil from Home Depot and night soil from Riker's Island). He's also filled a bubbling fishtank with homemade, rather rank diet cola and commissioned a Mexican ceramics company to fabricate a thousand heads that look nothing like Tom Cruise but are nonetheless named after him. Through Aug. 31. (Maccarone, 45 Canal St. 212-431-4977.)

VITALY KOMAR
The Russian-born artist, half of the conceptual team Komar and Melamid, here proposes "Three-Day Weekend," a quasi-serious plan for ecumenical harmony outlined in collages, mandala-like drawings, and stained-glass constructions. A repeating triangular structure designates Friday as the day of rest for Muslims, Saturday for Jews, and Sunday for Christians, with the whole long weekend open to those weary of sectarian violence. The charts are personalized with recurring pictures—segmented into kaleidoscopic fragments—juxtaposing a portrait of Komar's father, mother, and six-year-old self with one of Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt at Yalta. Through July 29. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 212-226-3232.)

BARRY MC GEE
A giant, overcrowded playroom of a show, McGee's installation comprises a ceiling-high pile of junked cars, a clubhouse nook with a ladder, a small fortress of old-school video monitors pouring forth colorful treacle, a giant, partly defaced painting of Dick Cheney's head, and a mechanized column of mannequins in shorts and flip-flops who endlessly mime spraying the tag "Amaze" in red on the wall. The walls are tiled with McGee's small panel paintings of bright lozenge shapes; they have the look of modernist linoleum, and form the real core of the show. Through Aug. 13. (Deitch Projects, 18 Wooster St. 212-343-7300.)

DANCE

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
The season concludes with two story ballets: first "Swan Lake," then "Giselle." July 5 and July 7-8 at 8 and July 6 and July 9 at 2 and 8: "Swan Lake." ♦ July 11-12 and July 14-15 at 8 and July 13 and July 16 at 2 and 8: "Giselle." (Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 212-362-6000.)

BOLSHOI BALLET
Moscow's ballet company visits New York, along with the full Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra, in the company's first visit to the Metropolitan Opera House since 1987. The season features the North American premières of "The Bright Stream" (a Soviet-era ballet set on a collective farm, with a score composed by Shostakovich) and "The Pharaoh's Daughter," choreographed by Petipa in 1862, to music by Cesare Pugni. Also playing are "Don Quixote" and Yuri Grigorovich's manly ballet, "Spartacus." (For full schedule, visit www.metoperafamily.org. Lincoln Center. 212-362-6000. July 18-30.)

"OCEAN"
Merce Cunningham's collaboration with John Cage is revived by the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, as part of the Lincoln Center Festival. (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. July 12-16 at 8.)

"I LA GALIGO"
The American première of Robert Wilson's latest epic, an ambitious multidisciplinary pageant based on "Sureq Galigo," a sacred poem of the Bugi people of Indonesia. Silhouetted against an expansive horizon, gods, mortals, and animals silently act their parts, accompanied by drums, reeds, flutes, birdsong, and a chanting storyteller. "I La Galigo" resembles an illuminated book of a creation myth, with page after page of stunning, colorful images, and Wilson has a lot in his paintbox: fans, sarongs, puppets, bamboo, glorious lighting, and a cast of fifty Indonesian dancers and musicians. Adapted by Rhoda Grauer, with an original score by Rahayu Supanggah. (Lincoln Center Festival, New York State Theatre. 212-721-6500. July 13-16 at 8.)

SHEN WEI DANCE ARTS
In the five years since he formed his company, the Chinese-born choreographer Shen Wei has been steadily stripping the ballet affectation and modern attitude from his steps. In the world première of "Map," he arrives at a pure, pared-down vocabulary—bouncing, rotational movement and Tai Chi-based circular motions. Blank-faced and simply dressed, Shen's dancers roll and careen across the floor, battling to keep pace with an urgent, insistent choral score by Steve Reich. "Near the Terrace Part I," a work from 2000, set to music by Arvo Pärt, also has its New York première. (Lincoln Center Festival, New York State Theatre. 212-721-6500. July 19 at 8. Through July 24.)

FUGATE/BAHIRI BALLET NY
The New York troupe presents four new works: "Romeo and Juliet in Mantua," choreographed by Davis Robertson and set to music by David Homan; "Quartet 2," by Alan Hineline, in which six dancers move to a string quartet composed by Jerome Begin; "Now and Again," by Jodie Gates, which incorporates improvised movement; and "Hook-Up," by Helen Heineman, about the separations and connections between a man and a woman. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. July 5 at 7:30, July 6-8 at 8, and July 9 at 2 and 7.)

PILOBOLUS
The troupe famed for its elastic spines and trompe-l'oeil partnering launches a four-week summer season at the Joyce. Highlights of the three rotating programs include the New York première of "Aquatic," an undersea exploration set to original music by the Brazilian composer Marcelo Zarvos, and the thirty-four-year-old company's very first evening-length work, "Megawatt > Full Strength," set to music by Primus, Radiohead, and Squarepusher. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. July 11-15 at 8 and July 16 at 2 and 8. Through Aug. 6.)

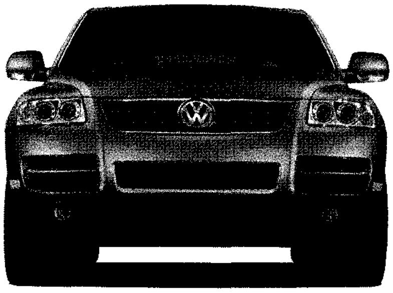
CIRQUE ÉLOIZE
The final week of the company's spectacle "Rain." (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. July 6 at 1 and 7, July 7-8 at 7, July 9 at 2 and 8, and July 10 at 3.)

MUGIYONO KASIDO
The son of shadow-puppet masters, Mugiyono Kasido trained as a classical Javanese court dancer before taking up choreography. Both backgrounds are on display when he performs two contrasting solos never before seen in New York. In the wry, comic "Kabar Kabur" ("Rumors"), the supple dancer punches his fists and legs beneath his oversized T-shirt, converting his body into a crude puppet theatre. But a traditional mood holds sway when he dons a ritual mask and robes for the trancelike "Bagaspati," a sequence of slow, sinuous, inscrutable gestures. (Lincoln Center Festival, Clark Studio Theatre. 212-721-6500. July 18-20 at 8.)

"FROZEN MOMMY"
"A current of hysteria flows through Tere O'Connor's willfully spare new work," our reviewer wrote last December, when the dance débuted at Dance Theatre Workshop. The show now returns for an encore. (219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. July 13-14 at 7:30 and July 15-16 at 7:30 and 9:30.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW
Four different groups perform at the Pillow over the next two weeks. At the Ted Shawn Theatre, Ronald K. Brown and his company, Evidence, present "Blueprint of a Lady," about the life and legend of Billie Holiday, centered on the jazz icon's signature songs, performed live by the excellent vocalist Nnenna Freelon. "Grace," Brown's spirit-stirring 1999 work for the Alvin Ailey company, concludes the program. (July 6-8 at 8, July 9 at 2 and 8, and July 10 at 2.) ♦ In the Doris Duke Studio Theatre, the choreographer Rennie Harris presents a repertory program that focusses on his all-male experiments with his company Puremovement. These pieces show Harris working to-



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ward the depth he achieved two years ago in "Facing Mekka," and the popping, locking, head spins, and acrobatics always bring down the house. Harris also performs his harrowing 1992 solo, "Endangered Species," a breakthrough work that revealed a new emotional range in the physical vernacular of hip-hop. (July 7-8 at 8:15, July 9 at 2:15 and 8:15, and July 10 at 5.) ♦ The following week, in the Ted Shawn space, the dancers in Alonzo King's San Francisco-based LINES ballet bring fashion-model beauty and bravura technique to the choreographer's trademark grafting of sinuous motion onto a muscular, classical base. Pieces include "Before the Blues," performed to a commissioned score played by the saxophonist Pharoah Sanders, and "Who Dressed You Like a Foreigner?," with taped accompaniment by the tabla master Zakir Hussain. (July 13-15 at 8, July 16 at 2 and 8, and July 17 at 2.) ♦ At the Doris Duke, Ben Munisteri Dance Projects presents the repertory assortment "Retrospective Portfolio," the recent piece "Not Human," and the world première of "Thunderblood," set to an original score by the violinist Evren Celimli, who performs along with a bassist. (July 14-15 at 8:15, July 16 at 2:15 and 8:15, and July 17 at 5.) (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745.)

MARTHA GRAHAM DANCE COMPANY

The group gives a weekend of performances at Bard College's Summerscape Festival, including "Cave of the Heart," "Hérodiade," and "Appalachian Spring," accompanied by the American Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Aaron Sherber. (Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7900. July 8-9 at 8 and July 10 at 3.)

NEW YORK CITY BALLET

At the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, the company begins three weeks of dance, featuring varied programs of repertory pieces and several performances of "A Midsummer Night's Dream." For full schedule, visit www.spac.org. (Saratoga Springs, N.Y. 518-587-3330. July 5-23.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERTS IN TOWN

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

Bramwell Tovey leads the orchestra in the last of this season's "Summertime Classics" concerts, a series of light-classical entertainments in Avery Fisher Hall. July 7 at 7:30 and July 8 at 8: In "Young at Heart," the pianist Stewart Goodyear makes his Philharmonic début in Dohnányi's "Variations on a Nursery Song," the highlight of a program that also includes music by Bizet and Britten ("The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra") and excerpts from Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker." ♦ July 9 at 8 and July 10 at 5: In "Soirée Française," the soprano Laura Claycomb and the mezzo-soprano Beth Clayton offer arias from "Lakmé" (the "Bell Song" and the ubiquitous "Flower Duet"), "Tales of Hoffmann," and "Les Huguenots," interspersed with orchestral selections by Dukas, Offenbach, and Bizet. (For tickets, call 212-875-5656.) ♦ In the first of two free parks programs, Xian Zhang, the orchestra's assistant conductor, joins the violinist Karen Gomyo (in her Philharmonic début) for a jaunt through mostly upbeat works by Wagner, Lalo (the "Symphonie Espagnole"), and Tchaikovsky (the Fifth Symphony). (Prospect Park, Brooklyn. July 12. / Great Lawn, Central Park. July 13. / Cunningham Park, Queens. July 14. / Van Cortlandt Park, the Bronx. July 15. / Heckscher Park, East Islip, Long Island. July 16. / PNC Bank Arts Center, Holmdel, N.J. July 18.) ♦ Lorin Maazel, making his only appearance in the outdoor series, teams up with the cellist Lynn Harrell for an all-Dvořák concert featuring the "Carnival" Overture, the Cello Concerto, and the "New World" Symphony. (Great Lawn, Central Park. July 19.) (All concerts begin at 8. No tickets required.)

LINCOLN CENTER FESTIVAL

Gotham Chamber Opera's production of Respighi's **"La Bella Dormente nel Bosco"** is one of the festival's two opening events. (July 12-16. For more information, see Theatre.)

MUSIC AT THE FRICK COLLECTION: ILYA GRINGOLTS

The impetuous and intelligent young Russian violinist, one of the last phenoms to emerge from the Juilliard studio of the late Dorothy DeLay, makes his New York recital début in sonatas by Mozart, Bartók, and Schumann (No. 2, in D Minor). (1 E. 70th St. July 13 at 5:45. Note: The museum has instituted a charge for unreserved seats; call 212-547-0709 for tickets.)

OUT OF TOWN

BERKSHIRE OPERA

A semi-staged production of **"Rinaldo,"** Handel's dazzling first opera for London, begins the company's season, with a cast featuring such noted singers as Maureen O'Flynn, John Cheek, and David Walker; Gary Thor Wedow conducts. (Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington, Mass. 413-442-0099. July 7 and July 9 at 8 and July 11 at 2.)

TANGLEWOOD

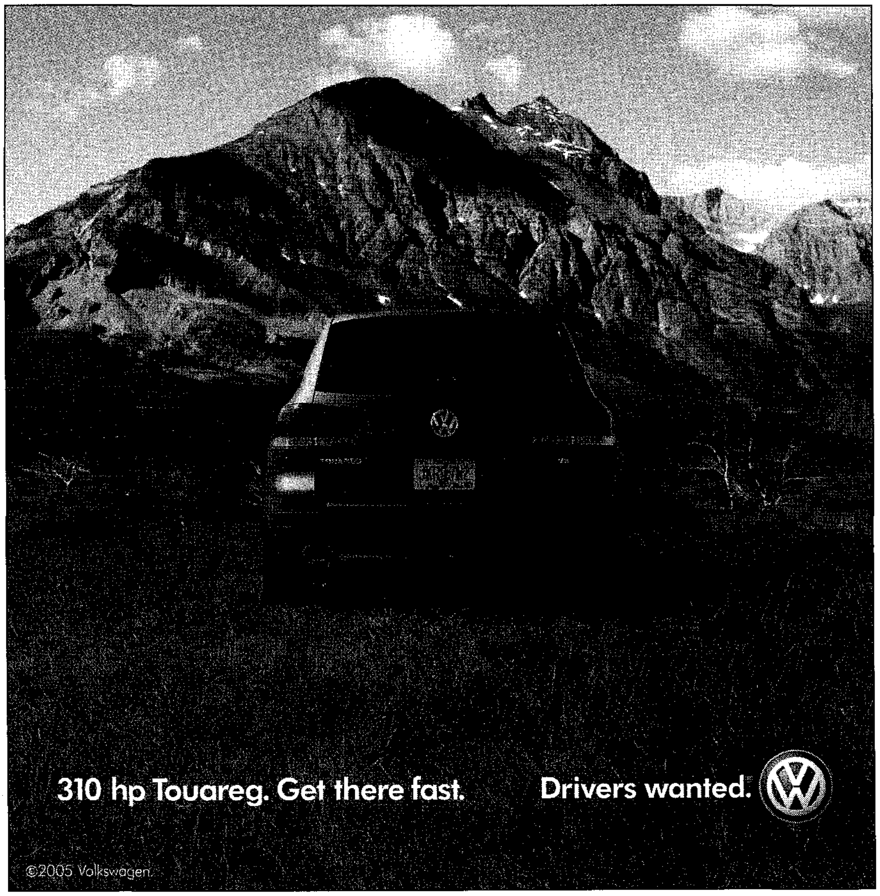
July 7 at 8:30: "Women Saintly and Otherwise," an evening with the extraordinary male chorus Chanticleer, includes music by Monteverdi, Poulenc, and Augusta Read Thomas. ♦ July 8 at 8:30: In a final rite of passage as the Boston Symphony Orchestra's music director, James Levine begins his first Tanglewood season with Mahler's Symphony No. 8, the last word in late-Romantic grandiloquence. His singers are superb—Deborah Voigt, Heidi Grant Murphy, Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, and John Relyea, among others. ♦ July 9 at 8:30: In the first of two concerts with the conductor Kurt Masur, the B.S.O. performs Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto (with Joshua Bell) and Bruckner's Symphony No. 4 ("Romantic"). ♦ July 12 at 8:30: Voigt, with the pianist Brian Zeger, offers a recital of songs by Tchaikovsky, Strauss, Schubert, Bolcom, and Ives. ♦ July 14 at 8:30: The Beaux Arts Trio plays a clutch of Beethoven piano trios (including the "Ghost" and "Archduke"). ♦ July 15 at 8:30: David Robertson conducts the B.S.O. in music by Stravinsky, Mozart (the Violin Concerto No. 3, with Christian Tetzlaff), and Haydn (the Symphony No. 88). ♦ July 16 at 8:30: The tireless Voigt and Levine return for an all-Wagner evening—Act I of "Die Walküre" and Act III of "Götterdämmerung"—with the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra; the cast also features Clifton Forbis, Christian Franz, and Mikhail Petrenko. (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200. For full schedule, visit www.bso.org.)

CARAMOOR FESTIVAL

July 8 at 8: "Extreme Chamber Music," an irreverent addition to this elegant Westchester series, continues with "The Creation of the World," a program by Michael Barrett's Music from Moab ensemble (along with the pianist Michael Boriskin) featuring the eponymous piece by Milhaud along with arrangements of Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring" and Debussy's "Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un Faune." ♦ July 9 at 8: Will Crutchfield, still thriving as Caramoor's director of opera, conducts the Orchestra of St. Luke's—and a cast lead by the soprano Sumi Jo—in Bellini's **"La Sonnambula"**; the stage director is Ira Siff. ♦ July 15 at 8: Another "Extreme" evening is offered by the New York Festival of Song in "Dance Date with Cuba," a program of vocal music by Lecuona and Anckermann, among others; the performers include the mezzo-soprano Vivica Genaux and Barrett and Steven Blier on piano. ♦ July 16 at 8: The pianist Hélène Grimaud joins Peter Oundjian and the orchestra for music by Rossini, Ravel (the Piano Concerto in G Major), and Berlioz (the "Symphonie Fantastique"). ♦ July 17 at 4:30: George Steel and his Vox Vocal Ensemble continue the summer's Bach series with a performance of the composer's greatest work—the Mass in B Minor. (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252. For full schedule, see www.caramoor.org.)

MUSIC FESTIVAL OF THE HAMPTONS

Lukas Foss, one of the last giants from American music's Greatest Generation, presides over this two-



week festival, which begins with Foss conducting an orchestral concert that includes Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21 in C Major (with the eleven-year-old prodigy Drew Petersen at the keyboard). (Festival Tent, Butter Lane, Bridgehampton, N.Y. 800-644-4418. July 8 at 8:30. For full schedule, see www.musicfestivalofthehamptons.com.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS
This summer the Maverick is devoting several of its concerts to commemorating the work of the flutist and conductor Georges Barrère, a powerful figure in the series' early history, and of the brilliant early-twentieth-century Hudson Valley composer Charles Tomlinson Griffes. July 9 at 6: Frederic Chiu performs "The Nijinsky Connection," a program featuring solo piano works by Debussy, Ravel, and Prokofiev (the Sonata No. 3 and the "Visions Fugitives") along with a Griffes feast: the Sonata, the "Roman Sketches," and "The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan." ♦ July 10 at 3: Carol Wincenc offers "The Incredible Flutist," a re-creation of a nineteen-thirties Barrère concert that, along with works by Bach, Fauré, and Debussy, includes two masterpieces written for him—Varèse's "Density 21.5" and Griffes's "Poem." ♦ July 17 at 3: Music by Beethoven, Alan Shulman, and Dohnányi (the very Brahmsian Piano Quintet No. 1), performed by the pianist Lydia Artymiw and the Miami String Quartet. (Woodstock, N.Y. For more information, call 845-679-8217.)

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
July 9 at 8: The radiant soprano Susan Narucki sings Schoenberg's entrancing "Book of the Hanging Gardens" in a concert that also features the pianist Boris Berman and the Fine Arts Quartet performing music by Brahms (including the Piano Quintet), a perennial Norfolk favorite. ♦ July 16 at 8: The Fine Arts returns to rescue some deserving music from the shadows—the Quartets by Bruckner and Grieg and the Third Quartet by George Antheil. (Norfolk, Conn. 860-542-3000. For full schedule, see www.yale.edu/norfolk.)

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA
There isn't a more powerfully intimate way to experience opera in the Northeast than at the Alice Busch Opera Theatre, where the company offers three operas in repertory. July 9 at 8 and July 17 at 2: Beatrice Jona Affron conducts **"Lucie de Lammermoor,"** Donizetti's dramatically incisive French version of his celebrated "Lucia." Lillian Groag directs a cast that includes Sarah Coburn (in the title role), Raúl Hernández, Earle Patriarco, and Craig Phillips. ♦ July 10 at 2: The director Tim Albery teams up with the conductor Stewart Robertson, the company's music director, for **"Così Fan Tutte."** Anne-Sophie Duprels, Sandra Piques Eddy, John Tessier, and Palle Knudsen sing the roles of the confused young lovers; Camille Zamora is Despina; and Sanford Sylvan is Don Alfonso. ♦ July 16 at 8 and July 18 at 2: A double bill of French one-act operas—Massenet's **"Le Portrait de Manon"** and Poulenc's **"La Voix Humaine"**—joins the lineup. Andrew Bisantz conducts the first, with a cast that includes Theodore Baerg, Bruce Reed, Colin Ainsworth, and Kristine Winkler; Robertson conducts the second, a star turn for the soprano Amy Burton. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
July 10 at 3: The Avalon String Quartet and the clarinettist Alexander Fiterstein perform the Clarinet Quintets of Mozart and Brahms. ♦ July 17 at 3: An expansive afternoon with the Amernet String Quartet, who survey quartets by Haydn (in F Minor, Op. 20, No. 5) and Brahms along with works for piano quintet (with Alpin Hong) by Schubert, Granados, and Wagner (an arrangement of the "Siegfried Idyll"). (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126.)

MARLBORO FESTIVAL
The pianists Mitsuko Uchida and Richard Goode direct this annual school and festival, devoted to deeply considered performances of the chamber-music repertory, which runs through Aug. 14. (Marlboro, Vt. July 16 at 8:30 and July 17 at 2:30. Programs are announced one week in advance at www.marlboromusic.org.)

MOVIES OPENING

THE BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY
In Hans Petter Moland's drama, a young man (Damien Nguyen) who is the love child of an American soldier who served in Vietnam travels to the U.S. to find his father (Nick Nolte). With Bai Ling. In Vietnamese and English. Opening July 8. (Empire 25 and Quad Cinema.)

CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY
Johnny Depp plays Willy Wonka and Freddie Highmore plays Charlie in Tim Burton's remake. Opening July 15. (In wide release.)

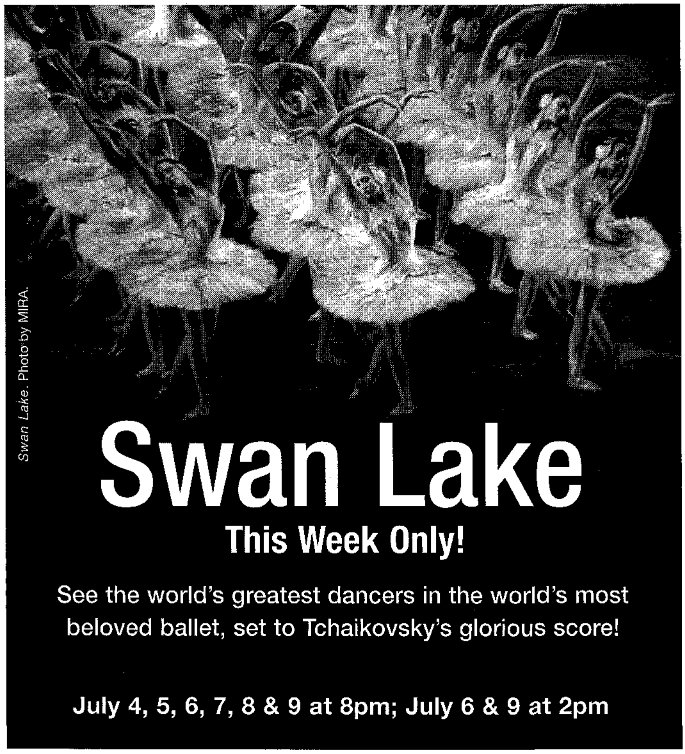
CRÓNICAS
A star reporter for a Miami news-magazine show (John Leguizamo) follows the trail of a serial killer, in a drama directed by Sebastián Cordero. In Spanish. Opening July 8. (Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.)

DARK WATER
Walter Salles ("The Motorcycle Diaries") directed this suspense thriller with Jennifer Connelly as a single mother who becomes the victim of mysterious mind games. Opening July 8. (In wide release.)

DOING TIME, DOING VIPASSANA
A documentary about an inspector general of prisons in India who successfully introduced meditation into a corrupt and violent prison. Opening July 8. (Cinema Village.)

FANTASTIC FOUR
Four astronauts are exposed to cosmic rays, which turns them into Mr. Fantastic, Invisible Woman, Human Torch, and the Thing. With Ioan Gruffudd, Jessica Alba, Michael Chiklis, and Kerry Washington. Opening July 8. (In wide release.)

ABT American Ballet Theatre



Swan Lake. Photo by MIRA.

Swan Lake

This Week Only!

See the world's greatest dancers in the world's most beloved ballet, set to Tchaikovsky's glorious score!

July 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9 at 8pm; July 6 & 9 at 2pm

Alessandra Ferri in Giselle. Photo by Fabrizio Ferri.

The epitome of Romantic ballet, this timeless tale of unrequited love and forgiveness is the quintessential fusion of music, movement and drama.

Giselle

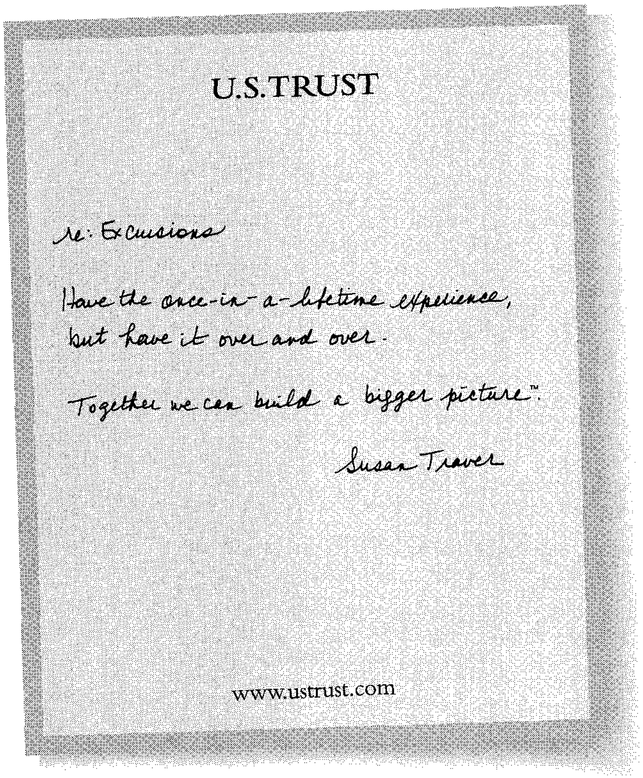
Opens Next Week!

July 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 & 16 at 8pm
July 13 & 16 at 2pm

Metropolitan Opera House Box Office
64th St. and Broadway; Sun 12-6 pm, Mon-Sat 10 am-8 pm

212.362.6000

www.abt.org



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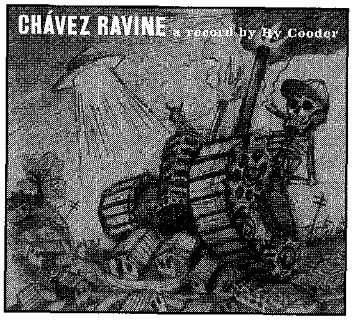
Words on Music

Borders' music expert John Bronicki says:
"In this rare outing, Ry Cooder is player, singer, composer, producer and storyteller. Combining new songs with period material, he reveals a world of Latino music now vanished but richly evoked by an extraordinary group of musicians."


CHÁVEZ RAVINE
a record by Ry Cooder

"A time-warped, kaleidoscopic, deep-grooved reimagining of a community arbitrarily destroyed...it's a modern daydream about a place as vanished as Atlantis." – ***Jon Pareles, The New York Times***

The *L.A.Times* calls **Ry Cooder's** latest recording "a long glance back at a now-vanished Los Angeles and the poor hilltop neighborhood called Chávez Ravine, rich in traditions, whose memory hovers like a ghost over today's city...an exercise in memory, history, and myth-making – trying to reconstruct not just a physical place, but a way of life, plank by plank."

Cooder employs *conjunto, corrido,* R&B, Latin pop, and jazz to conjure the ghosts of the area at mid-twentieth century on fifteen tracks sung in Spanish and English. Cooder is joined by East L.A. legends including the late Chicano music patriarch Lalo Guerrero, Pachuco boogie king Don Tosti, Thee Midniters front man Little Willie G., and Ersi Arvizu, of The Sisters and El Chicano.

BORDERS®

HAPPY ENDINGS
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening July 15. (In wide release.)

HUSTLE & FLOW
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening July 22. (In wide release.)

MURDERBALL
A documentary about quadriplegic rugby players, directed by Dana Adam Shapiro and Henry Alex Rubin. Opening July 8. (In wide release.)

ON THE OUTS
Lori Silverbush and Michael Skolnik's drama follows three young Jersey City women—a drug pusher, a crack-addicted single mom, and a woman involved with a local rogue. Opening July 13. (Film Forum.)

THE RECEPTION
A drama by John G. Young, in which the husbands of a woman and her estranged daughter become attracted to each other. Opening July 15. (Quad Cinema.)

SARABAND
In Ingmar Bergman's follow-up to his 1973 film "Scenes from a Marriage," Marianne (Liv Ullmann) visits Johan (Erland Josephson) after thirty years of divorce. In Swedish. Opening July 8. (Film Forum and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

CLASSICAL NOTES
DIAMOND LIFE

David Diamond, who died on June 13 at eighty-nine, came of age in the broad-shouldered nineteen-thirties, when a group of young American composers seemed poised to invade a European repertory and paint it red, white, and blue. Diamond's First Symphony had a high-profile première at the New York Philharmonic in 1941; his Second Symphony, a soaring requiem for a world at war, followed in Boston in 1944. Plainspoken and grand, easily grasped yet beautifully constructed, these works were stamped with the spirit of New Deal America, when a lightly socialistic populism ruled the arts. In the following decades, Diamond suffered the same decline that caught up with many other composers of his generation. His style came to seem dated in light of postwar European trends, his leftist politics and homosexuality were marked as suspect in the age of McCarthy, and American classical audiences continued to shrug off the accomplishments of native talent. But Diamond persisted, writing eleven symphonies in total (the last had its première at the Philharmonic in 1992), ten string quartets, and a political opera entitled "The Noblest Game," which New York City Opera planned to produce and then shelved.

Diamond's primary advocate in recent years has been Gerard Schwarz, the music director of the Seattle Symphony, who made some very solid recordings of Diamond's major works for the Delos label in the early nineteen-nineties. The Naxos label has now reissued those disks, making them available for budget prices. The volume containing the Second and Fourth Symphonies distills some of the composer's finest music; the Third Symphony, with a meltingly beautiful slow movement that gave Leonard Bernstein a bit of the melody of "Somewhere," also has high impact. A tempting alternative is a Bernstein compilation on Sony, which combines the Fourth Symphony with Roy Harris's Third, the "Citizen Kane" of mid-century symphonies.

—*Alex Ross*

SEARCHING FOR THE WRONG-EYED JESUS
Andrew Douglas directed this documentary, in which the alt-country singer Jim White takes a journey through the American South. Opening July 13. (IFC Center.)

THE WARRIOR
An enforcer in the drug wars in Rajasthan, India, gives up his violent ways, only to become the prey of his former colleagues. Directed by Asif Kapadia. In Hindi. Opening July 15. (Angelika Film Center.)

WEDDING CRASHERS
A pair of womanizers (Owen Wilson and Vince Vaughn) find themselves at odds when one of them decides to get married. Opening July 15. (In wide release.)

NOW PLAYING

BATMAN BEGINS
And ends with a whimper. Christopher Nolan, working with a screenplay that he wrote with David S. Goyer, has attempted a literal-minded myth of creation. The orphaned young Bruce Wayne (a gloomy Christian Bale) undergoes an initiation in some nameless Asian snow-capped mountains, where he's trained by a morally ambiguous adjunct (Liam Neeson) to a shadowy ninja vigilante leader (Ken Watanabe). The screenplay sounds as if it were written after a course in self-realization taken on Santa Monica Boulevard, and the direction is both pompous and cheesy, with ridiculous plot developments and lots of whirling movement shot so close that we can't really see anything. Gotham is no longer a malignant paradise of evil; it's just dark. With Morgan Freeman and Michael Caine wasted in poorly written roles as Batman's allies.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 6/13 & 20/05.) (In wide release.)

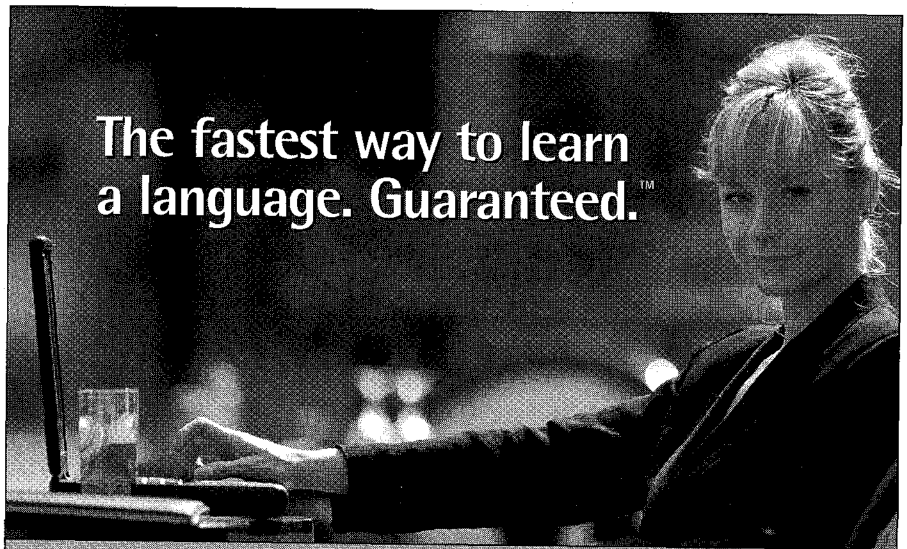
THE BEAT THAT MY HEART SKIPPED
The jumpy young hero of Jacques Audiard's new film, Thomas Seyr (Romain Duris), works at sordid real-estate schemes while dreaming of a career as a concert pianist. As Tom tears around Paris, rushing in and out of buildings and clubs, Audiard and his cinematographer Stéphane Fontaine crowd in behind him. In his black leather jacket, Duris is an anxious little hot shot with a twitchy, feral snarl that comes close to the reflexive grimace of the dangerous young Jean-Louis Trintignant. As Tom begins to move away from crime, the picture doesn't collapse into a stuffy display of virtue—the classical music that might save the hero is just as dangerous for him as his life of intimidation and fraud. With Niels Arestrup as Tom's baleful old reprobate father and Linh-Dan Pham as the Vietnamese pianist who takes him on as a student. This remake is more realistic and convincing than the movie it was based on, the notorious James Toback picture from 1978, "Fingers," in which Harvey Keitel starred as a Mafia enforcer who loved to play Bach. In French.—*D.D.* (7/4/05) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

BEWITCHED
We are ever more besieged by attempts to turn ancient TV shows into modern movies, many of them disastrously dull. This one, directed by Nora Ephron and co-written with her sister Delia, courageously tries a different tack, and what we end up with is a disaster of another order entirely. Nicole Kidman plays not Samantha (as incarnated for all eternity by Elizabeth Montgomery) but a witch named Isabel, who, having landed in Los Angeles, just happens to win the role of Samantha in a new version of the original series. After a sprightly first ten minutes, the magic simply evaporates from the surface of the film, and one actor after another comes to grief: Will Ferrell overheats as a fading star called Jack, who fancies himself as a Darren *de nos jours*, while Shirley MacLaine is handed the part of Endora and pretty much abandoned to her fate. The only person who cheers you up is Michael Caine, who remains knowingly calm as the chaos descends. A disenchanting spectacle all around.—*Anthony Lane* (6/27/05) (In wide release.)

GEORGE A. ROMERO'S LAND OF THE DEAD
The godfather of zombie movies does his fourth dance with the dead in this take-no-prisoners horror opus. The setting is pure urban jungle—the poor live on the streets, the rich live in gleaming high-rises, and an electrified fence surrounding the city keeps the zombies at bay. It all goes to hell, of course, as it has many times before, but Romero's wit and gross outrageousness are still unequalled. There's a surprisingly strong class-warfare subtext at work here that's sweepingly entertaining, and Romero wisely guides his actors (Dennis Hopper and Asia Argento among them) through the bloody muck and mire with revolutionary enthusiasm.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

HAPPY ENDINGS
A complicated and excessively self-conscious mess that doesn't, in the end, add up to a lot but that has many affecting and funny moments along the way. Lisa Kudrow, teaming up again with the writer-director Don Roos (they made the tart "Opposite of Sex" in 1998), plays Mamie, a sardonic Los Angeles woman who gave up her son at birth and is being blackmailed by a chaotic young filmmaker (Jesse Bradford) who claims to know the name and whereabouts of the boy, now a teen-ager. In parallel stories, two gay men duel with a lesbian couple over the paternity of a baby, and a drifting young club singer and sex parasite (Maggie Gyllenhaal) seduces both a young gay man (Jason Ritter) and his wealthy widower father (Tom Arnold). Roos is trying to devise a shorthand method of unifying a whirl of narrative events, but he hasn't done the basic work of construction that would pull the stories together. Much of the writing is lively, however, and the actors are good—especially Gyllenhaal, who, as a very bad girl, has an irresistible smile.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

INTERNATIONAL HOUSE
In this spirited mishmash from 1933, bigwigs from many countries converge on Wu-Hu, China, to land the rights to a prototype of television; it's supposed to project a six-day bike race but instead picks up everything from ships at sea to musical acts, like Cab Calloway singing "Reefer Man." Unlike latter-day gag movies of the "Airplane!" and "Hot Shots!" ilk, revue comedies like this one allowed vaudeville personalities to create their own space to shine. George Burns and Gracie Allen show off their crazy comic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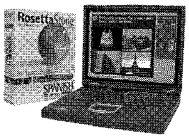

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syncopation, while W. C. Fields, as Professor Quail, parks his auto-gyro on a hotel roof garden, asks, "Is this Kansas City, Kansas, or Kansas City, Missouri?," and saunters away with the rest of the movie. Fields gives off a hilarious air of entitlement; in this film he's at the peak of his dirty old manhood. Bela Lugosi is self-parodistically—and gloriously—imperious as the head of the Moscow Utility Company.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; July 7.)

MARCH OF THE PENGUINS
The French wildlife filmmaker Luc Jacquet spent more than a year chronicling the course of an emperor-penguin colony in Antarctica, and what he discovered was a touching, self-sacrificing ritual of parenthood. Trekking for miles through stunning ice-castle landscapes, Jacquet frames the penguins' mating cycle—from courtship through the birth and raising of their newborns—as a severe and forbidding ballet that demonstrates the true meaning of survival and determination. Narrated by Morgan Freeman.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

ME AND YOU AND EVERYONE WE KNOW
Miranda July, who functions not just as the writer and director of her début but also as the star, plays an artist named Christine—hazy, shy, benign, and very possibly deranged. She falls for a shoe salesman (John Hawkes), who is recently separated and supposed to be caring for his two young sons. The elder boy (Miles Thompson) is seduced, and half humiliated, by a pair of underage girls; the younger (Brandon Ratcliff) logs onto pornographic chat rooms on the Internet. There is much distance and disaffection on parade, and, for all the skill of the child actors, no amount of tidy payoffs can dispel the air of unpleasantness. In other areas, the movie is more relaxed, and some of the scruffy, shining cityscapes are a sorrowful joy to behold; whether you admire the outcome depends on whether you like the kind of picture in which the most spiritually urgent tribute is paid to a dead fish.—*A.L.* (6/27/05) (In wide release.)

MR. AND MRS. SMITH
Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, a married couple who work as professional killers, are unhappy in bed, so they warm each other up by firing machine guns, Glocks, and God knows what else at each other at point-blank range and then kicking each other in the groin. When you see it, you understand why the rest of the world thinks Americans are crazy. Doug Liman, the young director who began his career making nifty independent movies like "Swingers" and "Go," now apparently believes that if violence is insouciant and zippy and meaningless it will be taken as the latest in sophisticated fun. Jolie, turning her head sideways and dropping her eyelids, looks great, but what she does in this movie is more like voguing than acting, and Pitt's voice is so toneless and inexpressive that it's frequently inaudible. Written by Simon Kinberg.—*D.D.* (6/13 & 20/05) (In wide release.)

RIZE
In the fashion photographer David LaChapelle's exhilarating take on competing groups of urban dancers in South Central L.A., the highly charged rival styles of the clowners and the krumpers are breathtaking to watch; both styles are a whirling dervish of limbs, although krumping is a more stripped-down, confrontational version. LaChapelle's ornate filmmaking captures the dances in all their violent beauty, and the film is also a richly complex exploration of the lives of these inner-city teens; it's a hip-hop poem to their self-expression and resiliency.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

THE TALENT GIVEN US
In Andrew Wagner's inspired low-budget drama—for which he ingeniously cast his family to play themselves—his good-humored and voluble septuagenarian mother (Judy Wagner) and taciturn father (Allen Wagner) fill their restless Upper West Side days with crosswords, stock-market trades, and watching their daughter on "E.R." When Judy gets it in her head that she must see her boy—Andrew, a forty-year-old English teacher-slash-screenwriter in L.A. and her "best chance" for getting grandchildren—she coerces her husband and their two grown daughters (Maggie and Emily Wagner) to drive across America in a minivan. A recent medical condition has left Allen's speech impaired but his mind no less sharp, and he blusters through his impediment with considerable charm. Judy, still youthful, preens for the camera, and Emily, as the attention-starved baby of the family, is perfectly obnoxious. On the trip, the usual ebb and flow of kvetching and hysteria exposes latent resentments and indiscretions, and the notion that there is no escape from one's family is elevated—and ameliorated—by the inkling that the Wagners' story is, in fact, real.—*Shauna Lyon* (Cinemas 1, 2, and 3 and Village East Cinemas.)

UN VIVANT QUI PASSE
In 1979, while making his epochal Holocaust film, "Shoah," Claude Lanzmann filmed this interview with Maurice Rossel, a Red Cross doctor from Switzerland who, having visited Auschwitz and Theresienstadt in 1944, gave the latter a highly favorable report. Lanzmann questions Rossel insistently about the deceptions that the Germans forced the Jewish inmates of Theresienstadt to perpetrate for Rossel's benefit—which fooled the doctor completely. Lanzmann culminates his interview by reading a speech with which the Jewish "mayor" of the concentration camp had welcomed Rossel, which, though vague enough to pass unnoticed by the German captors, resounds unambiguously as a thinly veiled cry for help—and an exhortation to Rossel to not be deceived by appearances. Rossel is easy to despise and easier to mock, but the cold light of his detachment serves as a reminder of the tyrannical deceits that, even now, conceal atrocities. Released in 1997. In French.—*Richard Brody* (Florence Gould Hall; July 12.)

WAR OF THE WORLDS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

THE WORLD
The young Chinese director Jia Zhangke, in his fourth film—and the first not to be banned in China—turns Beijing's real-life World Park, with its tacky reproductions of the world's cultural wonders, into a derisive microcosm of China today. As Tao (Zhao Tao), an actress in the site's bland pageantry, and her boyfriend, Taisheng (Chen Taisheng), a security guard, ponder whether to marry, it seems not to matter: like their friends and colleagues, they struggle vainly for money, for love, and, mostly, for escape. Cell phones and walkie-talkies convey an oppressive mood of surveillance, and the prospect of immigration provides the only moment of true happiness. Jia's tenderness for his characters is infused with a quiet rage: as the distant wide-screen views freeze them in a confining emptiness, dead zones of action and dialogue suggest a land where imagination itself has been suppressed. In Mandarin.—*R.B.* (Cinema Village.)

Also Playing

HERBIE: FULLY LOADED: In wide release. **MADAGASCAR:** In wide release (5/30/05). **MAD HOT BALLROOM:** In wide release. **STAR WARS—EPISODE III: REVENGE OF THE SITH:** In wide release (5/23/04). **TROPICAL MALADY:** IFC Center.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

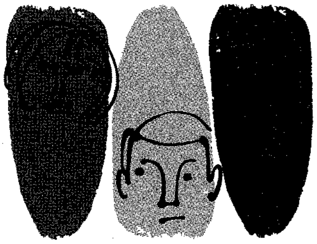
Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"Essential Cinema." July 6 at 7:30: Short films by Peter Kubelka (1957-1970). ♦ July 8 at 7:30: Restored films by Louis and Auguste Lumière (1986-1900). ♦ July 9 at 6: Short films by Fernand Léger, Francis Picabia, Man Ray, and Marcel Duchamp (1924-27; silent). ♦ July 9 at 8:30: Short films by Christopher Maclaine (1953-59). ♦ July 10 at 5: Film diaries by Jonas Mekas (1969). ♦ July 17 at 6: Short films by Georges Méliès (1899-1906; silent). ♦ July 17 at 8: "Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania" (1972, Mekas). ♦ "New Filmmakers." July 6 at 8: "Gonzo Music Diaries" (2004, Roy Szuper). ♦ July 13 at 6: "Bernie" (2004, Jay Heyman). ♦ July 13 at 8: "Mendy" (2004, Adam Samuel Vardy; in English and Yiddish). ♦ Benefit screening. July 8 at 7: "Still We Ride" (2005, Elizabeth Press, Andrew Lynn, and Christopher Ryan). ♦ "Goethe-Institut New York Presents." July 14 at 7:30: "Marlene" (1984, Maximilian Schell). ♦ "Curious Native Customs." July 14 at 8: Films by Robert Nelson (1965-98). ♦ July 15 at

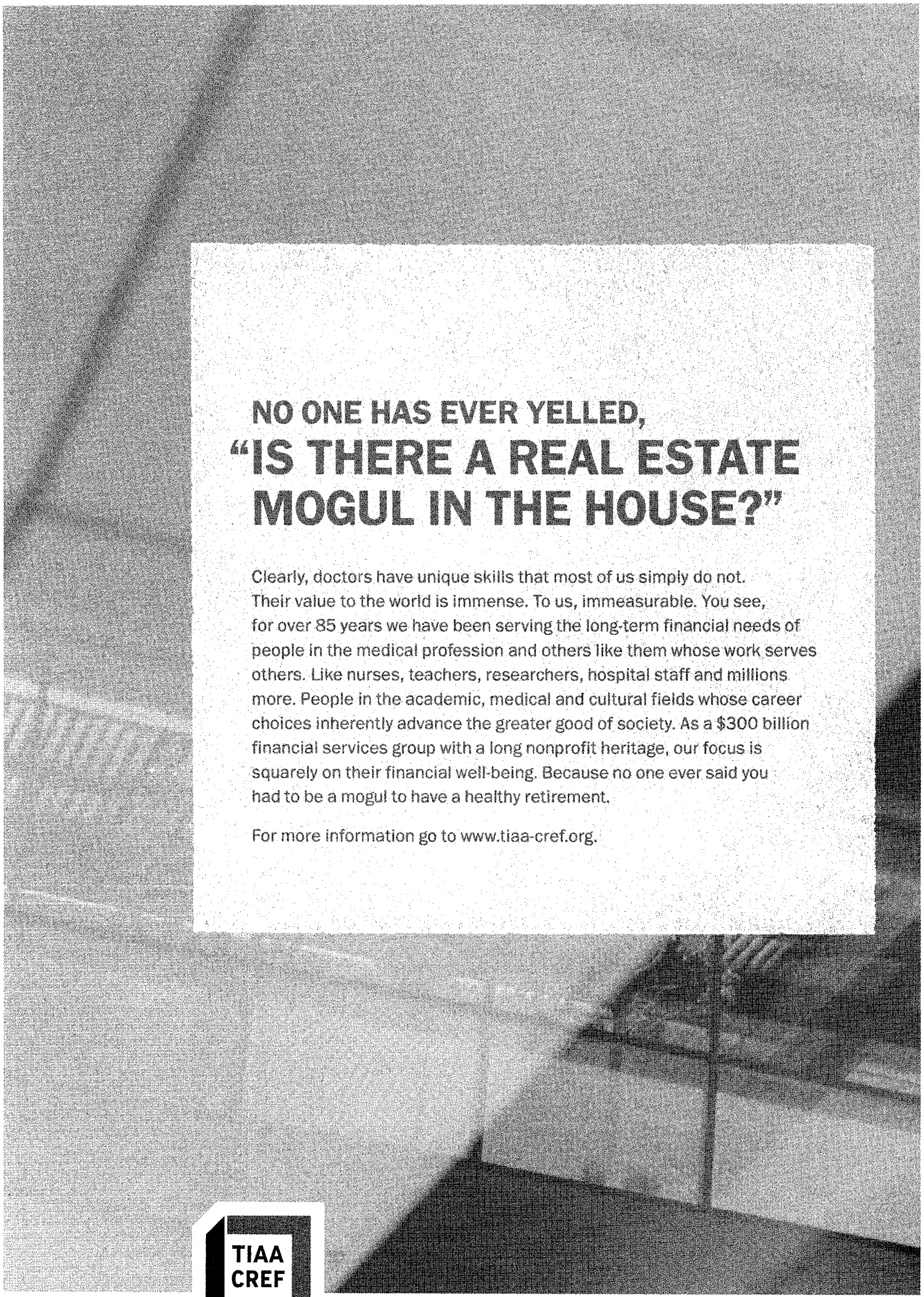
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
COLOR GUARD

In the latter half of his career, Krzysztof Kieslowski drew away from lone, unattached movies and moved toward more intricate endeavors. His "Decalogue" took cues from the Ten Commandments, and at the time of his death, in 1996, he was planning cinematic renditions of Heaven, Purgatory, and what directors like to call development hell. We should be grateful, then, that he completed his trilogy of "Blue," "White," and "Red." Despite the titles, these films make no effort to fly a revolutionary flag; rather, they are intimate studies of disconnection and loss, whose melancholia is forever interrupted by non sequiturs and bitty jokes. In the first, Juliette Binoche plays the widow of a composer, fighting to reorchestrate her life; the second finds Zbigniew Zamachowski tumbling out of a Parisian marriage and back into Polish society; in the third, Irène Jacob befriends an aging recluse on the shores of Lake Geneva. She asks whether he used to be a cop. "Worse," he replies, "a judge." So much for the force of institutions. What is left to depend upon? For the answer, watch all three films at MOMA on July 16 and wait for the tempestuous conclusion of the last.

—*Anthony Lane*



LAURIE ROSENWALD



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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

8: Films by Robert Nelson (1967-88). ♦ July 16 at 6: Films by Robert Nelson (1965-2003). ♦ July 16 at 8: Films by Robert Nelson (1963-98). ♦ New York première. July 15-19 at 7 and 9 and July 16-17 at 3 and 5: "The Oil Factor: Behind the War on Terror" (2004, Gerard Ungerman and Audrey Brohy).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Through July 28: "After Vigo." July 6 at 6:50 and 9:30: "Splendor in the Grass" (1961, Elia Kazan). ♦ July 7 at 7: "Before the Revolution" (1964, Bernardo Bertolucci; in Italian). ♦ July 11 at 6:50 and 9:15: "Zero for Conduct" (1933, Jean Vigo; in French). ♦ July 12 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "If . . . ." (1968, Lindsay Anderson). ♦ July 14 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The 400 Blows" (1959, François Truffaut; in French). ♦ July 18 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "High School" (1968, Frederick Wiseman). ♦ July 19 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "À Propos de Nice, la Suite" (1995, Catherine Breillat, Costa-Gavras, Claire Denis, Raymond Depardon, Abbas Kiarostami, Pavel Lungin, and Raoul Ruiz; in French). ♦ Through July 31: "In Deppth," a Johnny Depp retrospective. ♦ July 8 at 6:50 and 9:15: "A Nightmare on Elm Street" (1984, Wes Craven). ♦ July 9 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Edward Scissorhands" (1990, Tim Burton). ♦ July 10 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Cry-Baby" (1990, John Waters). ♦ July 15 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Donnie Brasco" (1997, Mike Newell). ♦ July 16 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Ed Wood" (1994, Burton). ♦ July 17 at 3, 6, and 9: "Arizona Dream" (1993, Emir Kusturica). ♦ "Cinemachat with Elliott Stein." July 13 at 7: "Haunting Douglas" (2003, Leanne Pooley) and "The Cost of Living" (2004, Lloyd Newsom).

TABLES FOR TWO
BAR AMERICAIN

152 W. 52nd St. (212-265-9700)—Bobby Flay first conquered downtown (with the Southwest-inspired flourishes of the Mesa Grill) and then the American heartland (with wildly successful cookbooks and TV shows). Now he's after midtown—a location that, culturally anyway, is roughly halfway between the two. He initially considered a Latin theme but reverted to a less risky formula of American regional cuisine served in a French-bistro atmosphere. The room, designed with theatrical flair by David Rockwell, is dominated by a colossal zinc bar with a vertiginously tilted mirror, imported from Paris. Mixed drinks, including such recondite classics as the Bronx and the Sazerac (a New Orleans concoction of brandy and bitters considered by some to be the first-ever cocktail), are made to match the Deco décor.

The first thing that strikes you about the menu is its pitiless calorie count. True, there is a raw bar—on a recent evening, the most popular appetizer appeared to be a tomatillo-laced riff on the old shrimp cocktail—but once Flay actually cooks something it is transformed into a lethal, irresistible delivery device for cholesterol. This is a menu on which delicate squash blossoms appear only to be fried and stuffed with pulled pork. Other appetizers include shrimp and grits, which Flay embellishes with bacon fat, and a Vidalia-onion soup smothered in cheese. Among the entrées, there are simply presented, almost inhibited steaks—rib eye, shell, hanger, or filet—and a lacklustre seafood cioppino that tries to bridge the divide between a bouillabaisse and a gumbo. The skate wing, on the other hand, has a buttery delicacy that is offset perfectly by a crisp hominy cake.

At the end of the meal, the lemon-meringue crème brûlée, a convincing hybrid, illustrates the restaurant's habit of producing transcendent versions of old favorites. This tendency reaches its apotheosis with the house-made potato chips, which can be ordered as a side or with drinks at the bar. Accompanied by a miniature tureen of blue-cheese dipping sauce, they are, in their humble way, the greatest treat on the menu. (Open weekdays for lunch and dinner and weekends for dinner. Entrées $21-$35.)

—*Leo Carey*

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through July 21: "Paramount Before the Code." July 6 at 1:10 and 4:20: "Pick-Up" (1933, Marion Gering). ♦ July 6 at 2:45: "Ladies of the Big House" (1931, Gering). ♦ July 6 at 6 and 9:20: "This Day and Age" (1933, Cecil B. DeMille). ♦ July 6 at 7:40: "City Streets" (1931, Rouben Mamoulian). ♦ July 7 at 1, 4:10, and 7:25: "The Big Broadcast" (1932, Frank Tuttle). ♦ July 7 at 2:45, 6, and 9:10: "International House" (†). ♦ July 8 at 1, 4:20, and 7:40: "Song of Songs" (1933, Mamoulian). ♦ July 8 at 2:45, 6:05, and 9:25: "Shanghai Express" (1932, Josef von Sternberg). ♦ July 9 at 1:30, 5:25, and 9:20: "The Blue Angel" (1930, von Sternberg; in German and English). ♦ July 9 at 3:35 and 7:30: "An American Tragedy" (1931, von Sternberg). ♦ July 10 at 1 and 5:30: "Cleopatra" (1934, DeMille). ♦ July 10 at 3 and 7:30: "The Sign of the Cross" (1932, DeMille). ♦ July 11-12 at 1:10 and 5:10 and July 11 at 9:10: Paramount musical short films. ♦ July 11-12 at 3:10 and July 11 at 7:10: Paramount cartoons. ♦ July 12 at 8: An evening with Peter Mintun. ♦ July 13-14 at 1 and 4:25 and July 13 at 7:50: "Bolero" (1934, Wesley Ruggles). ♦ July 13-14 at 2:40 and July 13 at 6:05 and 9:30: "Murder at the Vanities" (1934, Mitchell Leisen). ♦ July 14 at 7:45: "Love Me Tonight" (1932, Mamoulian). ♦ July 14 at 6:10 and 9:30: "One Hour with You" (1932, Ernst Lubitsch and George Cukor). ♦ July 15-16 at 1, 4:20, and 7:40: "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" (1931, Mamoulian). ♦ July 15-16 at 2:55, 6:15, and 9:35: "The Story of Temple Drake" (1933, Stephen Roberts). ♦ July 17-18 at 1:30, 4:35, and 7:40: "Monkey Business" (1931, Norman McLeod). ♦ July 17-18 at 3:15, 6:20, and 9:25: "Million Dollar Legs" (1932, Edward Cline). ♦ July 19 at 1, 4:05, 7:10, and 10:15: "Two Kinds of Women" (1932, William C. DeMille). ♦ July 19 at 2:30, 5:35, and 8:40: "Kick In" (1931, Richard Wallace).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL

55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—"Occupation of France Series." All films are in French. July 12 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Ernst Jünger à Paris, Journal d'Occupation 1941-1944" (1986, Edgardo Cozarinsky) and "Un Vivant Qui Passe" (†). ♦ July 19 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Operation Open Arms" (2004, Robin Massee), "Ni Travail, Ni Famille, Ni Patrie" (1993, Mosco Boucault), and "Primo Levi" (1990, Henry Colomer).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Through July 10: "Premiere Brazil!" All films are in Portuguese. July 6 at 8 and July 7 at 6: "Almost Brothers" (2004, Lúcia Murat). ♦ July 7 at 8:15: "Intermissions" (2004, João Moreira Salles). ♦ July 8 at 8: "Metalworkers" (2004, Eduardo Coutinho). ♦ July 9 at 2:30: "Cinema, Aspirin and Vultures" (2004, Marcelo Gomes). ♦ July 9 at 4:45: "Alô Alô Carnaval" (1936, Adhemar Gonzaga). ♦ July 9 at 6:30 and July 10 at 1: "Pelé Forever" (2004, Anibal Massaini). ♦ July 9 at 8:45: "Playing in the Dark" (2004, Toni Venturi). ♦ July 10 at 3:30: "Diary of a Provincial Girl" (2004, Helena Solberg). ♦ July 10 at 5:45: "Estamira" (2004, Marcos Prado). ♦ "Miramax: 25 Years." July 7 at 6: "Dirty Pretty Things" (2002, Stephen Frears). ♦ July 7 at 8: "Swingers" (1996, Doug Liman). ♦ July 8 at 6: "Trainspotting" (1996, Danny Boyle). ♦ July 8 at 8: "The Crying Game" (1992, Neil Jordan). ♦ July 9 at 3: "The Aviator" (2004, Martin Scorsese). ♦ July 9 at 9: "The Crow" (1994, Alex Proyas). ♦ July 10 at 5: "The Cider House Rules" (1999, Lasse Hallström). ♦ July 13 at 7: "Shakespeare in Love" (1998, John Madden). ♦ July 14 at 6: "Amélie" (2001, Jean-Pierre Jeunet; in French). ♦ July 14 at 8:30: "Like Water for Chocolate" (1992, Alfonso Arau; in Spanish). ♦ July 15 at 6: "Bride & Prejudice" (2004, Gurinder Chadha). ♦ July 15 at 8:30 and July 18 at 6: "City of God" (2002, Fernando Meirelles; in Portuguese). ♦ July 16 at 2: "The Grifters" (1990, Frears). ♦ July 16 at 4:30: "Blue" (1993, Krzysztof Kieslowski; in French). ♦ July 16 at 6:30: "White" (1994, Kieslowski; in Polish and French). ♦ July 16 at 8:30: "Red" (1994, Kieslowski; in French). ♦ July 17 at 2: "Kill Bill: Volume 1" (2003, Quentin Tarantino). ♦ July 17 at 5: "Kill Bill: Volume 2" (2004, Tarantino). ♦ "Anime!!" All films are in Japanese unless otherwise noted. July 10 at 2 and July 15 at 6: Four episodes of "The Phoenix: Chapter of Dawn" (1966-2004, Ryousuke Takahashi; in English). ♦ July 11 at 6: "Akira" (1988, Katsuhiro Otomo). ♦ July 11 at 8 and July 17 at 2: "Beautiful Dreamer" (1984, Mamoru Oshii). ♦ July 13 and July 18 at 6: "Crayon Shin-chan: Tip and Run! Pig Hoof Battle" (1998, Masaaki Yuasa). ♦ July 15 at 8: "Space Pirate Captain Harlock: Arcadia of My Youth" (1982, Tomoharu Katsumata). ♦ July 16 at 2: "Astroboy" (1963, Osamu Tezuka), "Marvelous Melmo" (1971, Tezuka), and episode one of "The Phoenix: Chapter of Dawn" (1966, Takahashi; in English). ♦ July 16 at 4: "Dragon Ball: Legend of the Dragon" (1986, Daisuke Nishio). ♦ "112 Years of Cinema." July 11 at 6: Short films from 1893-1907. ♦ July 14 at 6 and July 18 at 8: "Reminiscing in Tempo" (2005, Gary Keys). ♦ July 14 at 8: "Bike Boy" (1967, Andy Warhol). ♦ July 18 at 8: "Atlantic City" (1980, Louis Malle). ♦ July 18 at 8:30: "Escape from Alcatraz" (1979, Don Siegel). ♦ "New Works/New Acquisitions." July 11 at 8:30: "My Architect" (2003, Nathaniel Kahn). ♦ July 13 at 8 and July 16 at 8: "Soft and Hard" (1986, Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville; in French) and "The Old Place" (1998, Godard and Miéville; in French). ♦ July 16 at 6 and July 17 at 5: "Five" (2003, Abbas Kiarostami).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Outdoor Cinema, at Socrates Sculpture Park, on Broadway at Vernon Blvd., Long Island City. July 6 at 7: "Zorba the Greek" (1964, Michael Cacoyannis; in English and Greek). ♦ July 13 at 7: "Buena Vista Social Club" (1999, Wim Wenders; in English and Spanish). ♦ "Fist and Sword: Martial Arts Film Classics." July 8 at 7:30: "The Warrior" (2001, Asif Kapadia). ♦ Through Aug. 21: A Raoul Walsh retrospective. July 9 at 2: "The Man I Love" (1947). ♦ July 9 at 4: "The Bowery" (1933). ♦ July 10 at 2: "The Big Trail" (1930). ♦ July 10 at 4:30: "Me and My Gal" (1932). ♦ July 16 at 1:30: "The Thief of Bagdad" (1924; silent). ♦ July 16 at 4:30: "Sadie Thompson" (1928; silent). ♦ July 17 at 4:30: "Going Hollywood" (1933). ♦ Repertory nights. July 9-10 at 6:30: "Alphaville" (1965, Jean-Luc Godard; in French). ♦ July 16-17 at 6:30: "Rashomon" (1950, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese). ♦ Special preview screenings. July 8 at 8:30: "Last Days" (2005, Gus Van Sant). ♦ July 17 at 2: "Laughter" (1930, Harry d'Abbadie d'Arrast). ♦ "Cinema Tropical." July 15 at 7:30: "The Middle of the World" (2003, Vicente Amorim; in Portuguese).

SUNSHINE CINEMA

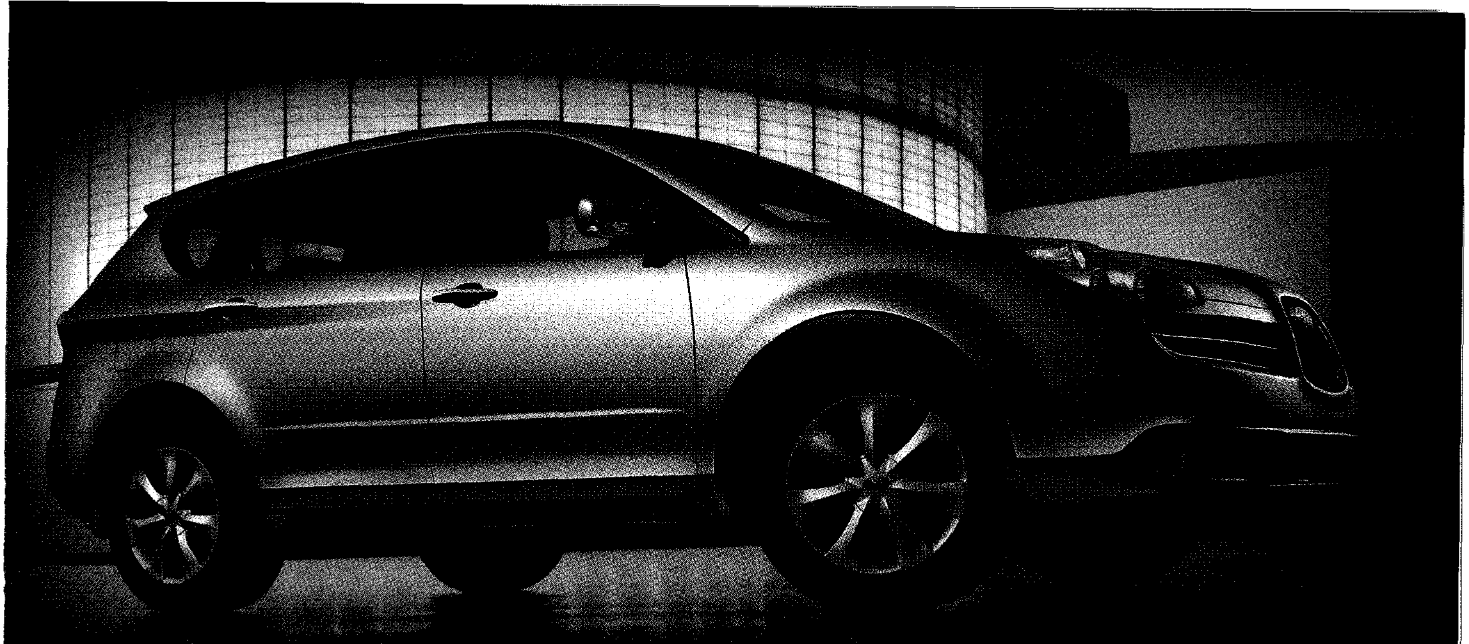
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. July 8-9: "Psycho" (1960, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ July 15-16: "The Warriors" (1979, Walter Hill).

THALIA THEATRE

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—July 9 at 6: "The Women" (1939, George Cukor). ♦ July 9 at 8:45: "Stage Door" (1937, Gregory La Cava).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through July 19: "Risks and Reinvention: The Cinema of Louis



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Malle." July 6 at 1:30 and 6: "Murmur of the Heart" (1971; in French). ♦ July 6 at 3:40: "Calcutta" (1969; in French). ♦ July 6 at 8:15 and July 10 at 3:45: "Phantom India: Part One" (1969; in French). ♦ July 7 at 1, 3:45, and 6:30 and July 10 at 1: "Lacombe, Lucien" (1974; in French, German, and English). ♦ July 7 at 9:10 and July 10 at 7: "Phantom India: Part Two" (1969; in French). ♦ July 8 at 2 and 6:30 and July 14 at 4 and 9: "Pretty Baby" (1978). ♦ July 8 at 4:15 and July 9 at 4:45: "Human, Too Human" (1974; in French). ♦ July 8 at 8:45 and July 10 at 9:10: "Phantom India: Part Three" (1969; in French). ♦ July 9 at 12:30 and 7: "Atlantic City" (1980). ♦ July 9 at 2:40 and 9:10 and July 11 at 4:30 and 8:30: "Black Moon" (1975; in French). ♦ July 12 at 1 and July 13 at 4 and 8:10: "My Dinner with André" (1981). ♦ July 12 at 3:15 and July 13 at 2 and 6:15: "Crackers" (1984). ♦ July 14 at 2, July 16 at 1, and July 17 at 6:45: "Alamo Bay" (1985). ♦ July 15 at 1 and 7 and July 16 at 5 and 9:20: "Au Revoir les Enfants" (1987; in French). ♦ July 15 at 3:15 and 9:10 and July 16 at 3: "God's Country" (1986). ♦ July 15 at 5:15 and July 17 at 1 and 5: "And the Pursuit of Happiness" (1986). ♦ July 16 at 7:10 and July 17 at 8:45: "May Fools" (1990; in French). ♦ July 17 at 2:45, July 18 at 3:50 and 8:40, and July 19 at 1:30 and 6:15: "Damage" (1992). ♦ July 18 at 1:30 and 6:15 and July 19 at 3:45 and 8:30: "Vanya on 42nd Street" (1994).

READINGS AND TALKS

"LEAVES OF GRASS"
This month, twenty local poets celebrate the sesquicentennial anniversary of Whitman's masterpiece. They'll be reading the 1855 edition in its entirety, starting on July 6 at 6:30 with Matthea Harvey, Liam Rector, Vincent Katz, Dawn Lundy Martin, and D. H. Melhem and continuing on Wednesdays through July 27, with five poets reading each week. (Brooklyn Historical Society, 128 Pierrepont St. 718-222-4111.)

"PARK LIT"
The roving reading series moves to Fort Greene Park, where Mark Magill, Mary Morris, Patricia Spears Jones, Mark Swartz, and Susan Wheeler (all of whom contributed to *Bomb's* summer literary supplement) will read from their work. (DeKalb Ave. at Cumberland St., Brooklyn. For more information, call 212-696-6609 or visit www.opencity.org/parklit. July 6 at 6:30.)

PROUST FEST
The Mercantile Library presents a daylong reading of the "Swann in Love" section from Lydia Davis's new translation of "In Search of Lost Time." (17 E. 47th St. 212-755-6710. July 9, starting at 10 A.M.)

"SUNDAYS AT SUNNY'S"
The science writer Alan Burdick, the novelist and music critic Jim Fusilli, and the short-story writer and poet Sharon Mesmer read from their work in Red Hook's classic old bar. (253 Conover St., between Beard and Reed Sts., Brooklyn. For more information, call 718-875-3677. July 10 at 3.)

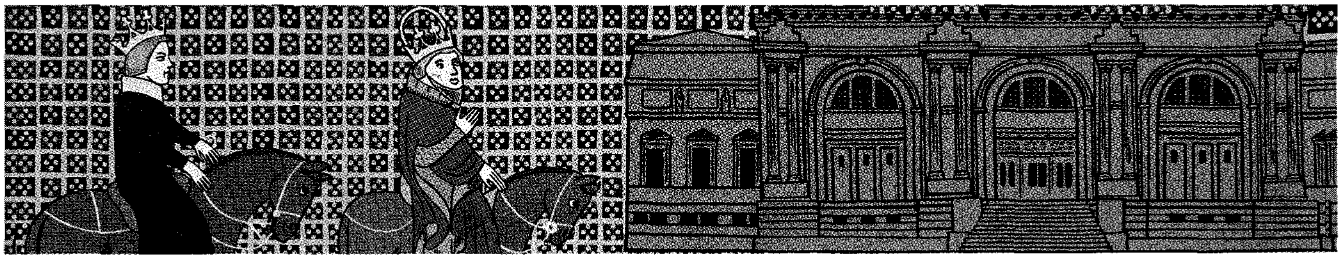
MARK SINGER
The *New Yorker* writer offers selections from "Character Studies," his collection of profiles for the magazine. (The Half King, 505 W. 23rd St. No tickets necessary. July 11 at 7.)

VICKI CONSTANTINE CROKE
The wildlife writer discusses her latest book, "The Lady and the Panda," an account of the quest by Ruth Harkness, a Manhattan socialite and dress designer, to save the giant panda in the nineteen-thirties. (American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. 212-769-5200. July 14 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"BAREFOOT DANCING"
Wave Hill, the verdant park and cultural institution in the Bronx, is a place where Charles Darwin, Theodore Roosevelt, and Mark Twain all once walked. On Wednesday nights in July it becomes a spot to follow in their footsteps—albeit shoeless. Kotchegna, a West African music and dance company complete with colorful costumes and complicated rhythms, opens the series on July 6. Instructions will be provided. The next week features Bonga and the Vodou Drums of Haiti. Zlatne Uste, a Balkan brass band, follows that. La Cumbiamba eNeYe, with music from Colombia, is the last group to perform, on July 27. (W. 249th St. at Independence Ave., the Bronx. For more information, call 718-549-3200.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
Some twelve hundred lots of furniture, jewelry, watches, and decorative arts—not to mention moderately priced paintings, etchings, and sculptures by such artists as Picasso, Steinberg, Arp, and Nancy Graves—are on offer at **Christie's** latest House Sale on July 12-13, an auction designed to appeal to the decorator's eye. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ Bargain hunters can also head to **Doyle** on July 13 for a similar auction of furniture, decorations, and paintings; Victorian decorative art works will be a highlight of the sale. (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.)



MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

ON THE HORIZON

CLASSICAL MUSIC
BACK TO BACH
Aug. 7, Aug. 9, and Aug. 11

As part of the Mostly Mozart Festival, Lorraine Hunt Lieberson reprises one of her most heartrending performances in Peter Sellars's staging of two of Bach's solo Cantatas, Nos. 199 and 82. Craig Smith conducts. (212-721-6500.)

THE THEATRE
FRINGE FESTIVAL
Aug. 12-28

The ninth annual Fringe Festival has more than a hundred and eighty shows in every genre imaginable, but the majority of offerings are comedies. There's "The Miss Education of Jenna Bush," which imagines the First Daughter's teaching career; "Go-Go Kitty, Go!," a Russ Meyer homage; and "Silence! The Musical," a song-rich parody of Hannibal Lecter's grisly adventures. (212-279-4488.)

MOVIES
GARBO AT 100
Sept. 17-Nov. 12

Scandinavia House presents "Garbo's Garbos," a celebration of the Swedish actress on the hundredth anniversary of her birth. More than a dozen of her best-known films will screen, and vintage photographs of the actress's private life will be on display. (212-879-9779.)

ART
BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY
Sept. 20-Jan. 3, 2006

When Charles IV was crowned King of Bohemia, in 1347, he set out to make Prague a cultural and artistic capital like Paris or Rome, a place that would attract and encourage scholars and artists. The great flowering of art and architecture that occurred during his reign and those of his two sons, Wenceslas IV and Sigismund, will be celebrated with "Prague, the Crown of Bohemia, 1347-1437," at the Met. (212-535-7710.)

NIGHT LIFE
WHITE STRIPES
Sept. 24

The Detroit duo comes to Keyspan Park for a concert that will showcase songs from their new album, "Get Behind Me Satan." As usual, expect plenty of Jack White's guitar pyrotechnics and impassioned vocals, not to mention Meg White's primitivistic drumming. The indie-rock darlings the Shins and Brendan Benson are also on the bill. (212-307-7171.)

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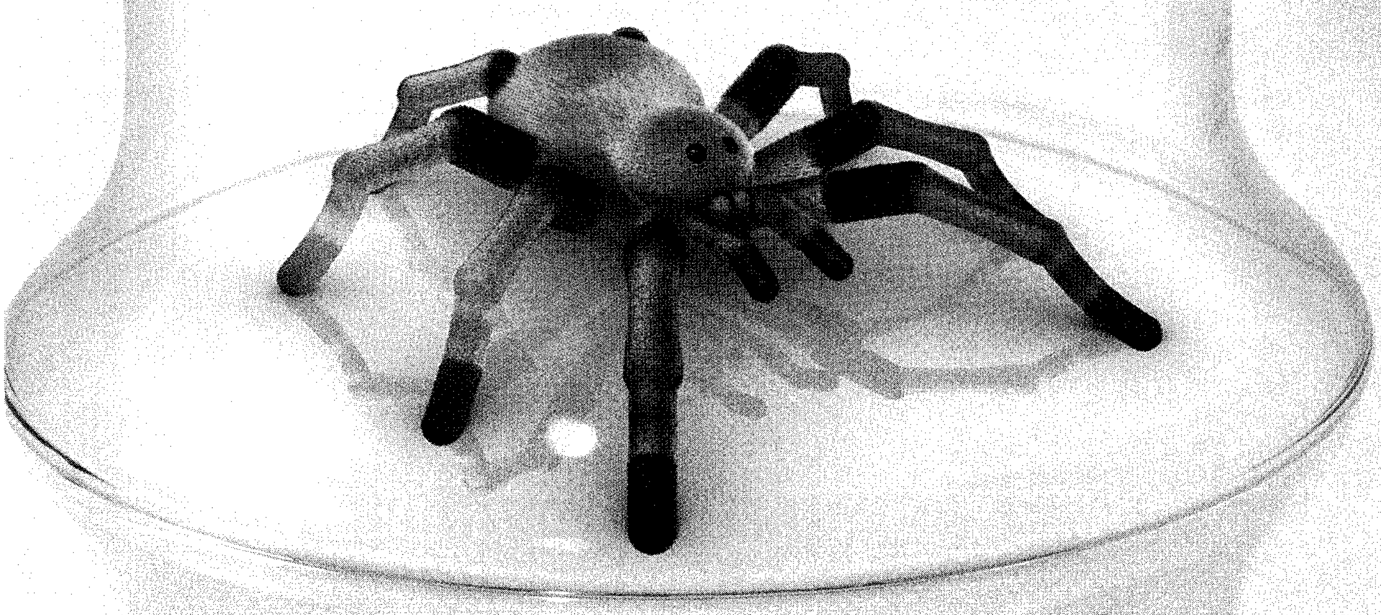

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Education Our A+ for Energy program will award $2 million in grants and scholarships to California teachers for innovative education activities. BP supports energy education throughout the country, from a traveling classroom that teaches alternative energy, to the Solar Decathlon in Washington, D.C.

Environment To provide heat, power and mobility for the U.S., new pipelines have to be built. In Louisiana, BP pioneered a new standard for pipeline construction. Working with environmental groups, community leaders, even local oystermen, we produced a solution that preserved wetlands.

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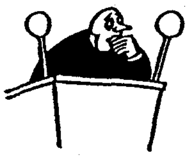
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
DECISIONS, DECISIONS

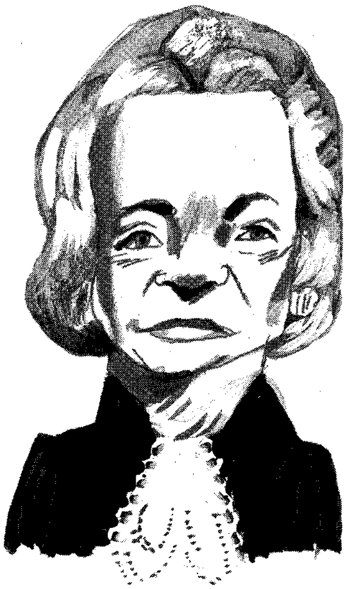


Theodore Roosevelt appointed Oliver Wendell Holmes to the United States Supreme Court, in 1902, because he believed that Holmes would be a reliable vote in cases arising out of Roosevelt's trust-busting crusade. He had grounds for his faith: he had interviewed Holmes for the job himself, and Holmes had written pro-labor decisions as a member of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. Two years later, a major antitrust case came before the court—U.S. v. Northern Securities, in which a gigantic railroad company created by J. P. Morgan and James J. Hill was appealing a conviction for violating the Sherman Antitrust Act. Holmes voted for the railroad. The Sherman Act, he explained, was designed to outlaw business practices "in restraint of trade." Morgan and Hill's company didn't restrain trade; it was just big. It might be politically popular to prosecute big business, but there was no law against size. Holmes was in the minority; the conviction was upheld by the Court. But Roosevelt was apoplectic. He stopped inviting the Holmeses to dinner at the White House.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARK ULRIKSEN

The fickleness, contrariness, and outright perfidy of Supreme Court Justices have exasperated the politicians who appointed them almost since the first days of the Republic. Presidents pledge to put men and women on the bench who will vote to sustain the constitutionality of the policies they support—generally equating this with qualities like "independence" and "adherence to the meaning of the Constitution"—and then watch their appointees, once unhitched from the political leash, stray all over the barnyard, sometimes ending up as heroes of the opposition. Harry Blackmun was appointed by Richard Nixon, in 1970, as part of a plan to make the Court more conservative. Three years later, he wrote the majority opinion in Roe v. Wade.

Sandra Day O'Connor, who was appointed by Ronald Reagan, in 1981, and who resigned from the Court last week, was never quite a hero to liberals. She was not a Blackmun-style boomerang. But she did manage, in nearly twenty-four years of service, to disappoint conservatives with impressive regularity. She was one of the five in a number of five-to-four decisions upholding affirmative action, patients' rights, environmental-protection laws, campaign-finance reform, the separation of church and state, and abortion rights. We will hear a lot about these votes from people who regret her departure and who loathe her replacement—even before any has been named—so it's worth remembering that she was also a consistent supporter of states' rights, and last year she voted with Chief Justice William Rehnquist, her old Stanford Law School classmate, eighty-four per cent of the time.



She was a conservative. What she was not was an ideologue. A lack of ideology was once an honored attribute in a judge. Judges weren't supposed to have ideologies; they were not even supposed to have, except in the most anodyne sense, philosophies. They needed only something called "judicial temperament," a sort of inner homing device that allowed them to weigh each case on its own merits and, somehow, always come out right. Professions of such a temperament by nominees and their supporters were, of course, often disingenuous, and sometimes ridiculous. During the hearings on his nomination to the Court by the first President Bush, Clarence Thomas, a graduate of Yale Law School, claimed never to have thought about the constitutionality of Roe v. Wade. He had plainly been coached by people who had learned the lesson of Robert Bork, a nominee who had had his very explicit philosophy, expressed in writings from which he vainly attempted to dissociate himself, tied to him like a block of concrete and had then been dumped into the Potomac.

Bork continues to haunt the confirmation process, a ghost of culture wars past. The man Bush appointed to the seat once intended for Bork, Anthony Kennedy, has caused even more conservative rage than O'Connor has. The leader of an evangelical group called Focus on the Family has called him "the most dangerous man in America." Bork—whose career as a judicial commentator since his rejection by the Senate has done nothing to persuade those who opposed him at the time that they were even a little bit wrong in pegging him as a doctrinaire hothead—has criticized Kennedy for intellectual vacuousness and judicial activism. The moral, for conservatives, is: Don't trust; verify. The conservative assault on the federal judiciary which reached critical mass in the exploitation of the Terry Schiavo case was a clearing of the ground for the fight over the next nomination to the Supreme Court. The argument of this assault is that "judicial temperament" is no longer enough. Kennedy has judicial temperament to burn, he is a practicing Catholic—and he voted to support gay rights.

But does a firm set of political views, or a rigidly consistent judicial philosophy, really make a Justice more effective in determining the long-term direction of the Supreme Court? The most predictable Justices now on the Court, Antonin Scalia and Thomas, seem brooding isolatoes, openly contemptuous of the doctrinal laxness of their brethren. On the opposite far end of the spectrum, William O. Douglas—later in his career especially—displayed some of the same intellectual snobbishness, with the same diminution of effectiveness. Judicial opinion-making is a collaborative business. It is, even, a political business, a matter of compromise and consensus-building. Whatever her limitations as a writer of deathless judicial prose, O'Connor was an intuitive Court-shaper. She knew politics: she is the first Supreme Court Justice to have been elected to public office (she was a state senator in Arizona) since Earl Warren.

O'Connor's opinions in close cases often split the difference between the two sides, and so prepared the way for greater consensus in similar cases down the road. In a forum at the National Archives earlier this year, O'Connor referred to some sculpted turtles that adorn the lampposts in the courtyard of the Supreme Court Building. "They move slowly," she said. "That's what we do." This approach has been called judicial pragmatism or minimalism. Holmes's term for it was "interstitial lawmaking." It's the tweaks, the little nudges in one direction or another in sometimes obscure cases, that, over time, change the face of the law. The only way to be sure that the change is the change you want is to take it one case at a time.

—Louis Menand

SPORTS DEPT.
TEAM FOR SALE

Except for a long hiatus from 1972 until this year, the nation's capital was always a baseball town. In the eighteen-eighties, fans packed a stadium called Swampoodle Grounds to cheer the Washington Statesmen—a nickname that in the Gilded Age came close to mockery. By the nineties, the Statesmen had given way to the Senators. Though still faintly satiric, this was a better name, because senators are something Washington reliably, ex officio, has.

In 1901, the National League Senators having folded, the nascent American League, eager for the prestige of a presence in the Federal City, cobbled together a new version from the remains of the disbanded Kansas City Blues. The reborn Washington Senators had a few good years, but their customary dwelling place was the cellar. By 1955, they had become enough of a joke to inspire the hit musical "Damn Yankees," the premise of which was that only a deal with the Devil could put them back up on top. After the 1971 season, they fled to a Dallas-Fort Worth suburb, becoming the Texas Rangers and, a couple of decades after that, making plausible the political career of George W. Bush.

This year, the Montreal Expos became the Washington Nationals, and baseball returned to Freedom's Home Town. The Nats turn out to be a hell of a team. In June, they won twenty of twenty-six games. Ah, Washington: no longer first in war, definitely not first in peace, but five games up in the National League East. You gotta have heart.

As it happens, the Nationals was the official name of the Senators for most of their history, from 1905 to 1956, but the fans never took to it. It might stick this time—a third of a century wipes away a lot of sentiment. But, if it again proves unpopular, perhaps the team can be renamed the Washington Lobbyists, to reflect more up-to-date power realities.

Or maybe just the Washington Republicans. Major League Baseball, which has owned the team since 2002, is currently considering bids for it from eight syndicates. One of them includes George Soros, and this has brought certain politicians charging out of the dugout, bats swinging. "I think Major League Baseball understands the stakes," Tom Davis, the chairman of the House Government Reform Committee, which oversees the District of Columbia, among other entities, told *Roll Call*, a Capitol Hill weekly. Baseball teams, he added darkly, "enjoy all sorts of exemptions," notably from antitrust laws. "We finally got a winning team," he elaborated in a chat with the *Times*. "Now they're going to hand it over to a convicted felon who wants to legalize drugs and who lives in New York and spent five million dollars trying to defeat the President?"

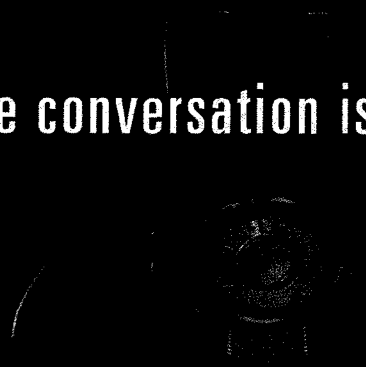
Actually, Soros does not want to legalize drugs, though he backs the Drug Policy Alliance, which promotes a "harm reduction" alternative to the failed policies of mass incarceration and militarized prohibition. He is a "convicted felon"—but in France, a detail that has caused cognitive dissonance at places like Fox News. It's an insider-trading case, still on appeal, and is based on some seventeen-year-old alleged dealings that would be unremarkable in the United States. (By contrast, our own George Steinbrenner, owner of those damn Yankees, is a felon of impeccably American lineage—convicted for illegal campaign contributions to one Republican President, Richard Nixon, and pardoned by another, Ronald Reagan.)

Davis's most outrageous charge is that Soros spent five million dollars trying to defeat President Bush. It was

Turn a

think piece

into a whole discussion.



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closer to twenty-five million. And this, of course, is his real offense. Only when Soros got involved in the 2004 campaign did he begin to come under fire from the right. The Republican Web site GOPUSA.com—later the home base of "Jeff Gannon," the fake journalist who was a favorite softball pitcher at White House press briefings—attacked Soros as "a prolocutor in the congregation of Moloch," a "Hungarian-born descendant of Shylock," and, worse, a funder of "groups that support increased government spending." More mainstream figures were scarcely less strident. Bill O'Reilly, of Fox News, called Soros "as far left as you can get without moving to Havana." And Dennis Hastert, the Speaker of the House, repeatedly insinuated that Soros's fortune comes from narcotics cartels. ("You know, Soros's money, some of that is coming from overseas. It could be drug money.")

Given the plot of "Damn Yankees," you might think that a prolocutor in the congregation of Moloch would be just what the Nats' front office needs. Even if the Soros bid succeeds, though, he's unlikely to be running the team. He has a fractional stake; Jonathan Ledecky, a Washington office-supply entrepreneur, would be in charge. But the bid probably won't succeed. According to John Sweeney, the vice-chairman of the House Appropriations subcommittee that oversees the District of Columbia's budget, a Nationals team tainted by Soros could forget about public funding for a new stadium.

"From a fan's perspective, who needs the politics?" Congressman Sweeney wanted to know. Well, in a town that went nine to one for Kerry over Bush, the perspective of fans won't necessarily count for much. Who needs the politics? One answer may be Frederic V. Malek, a principal in what *Roll Call* describes as "the ownership group seen by many insiders as the frontrunner to buy the team." Malek's C.V. is heavy with Republican credentials, including 1992 campaign manager for President George H. W. Bush and former part owner of the Texas Rangers, in which capacity he helped arrange for Bush's wayward son to be the front man and reap a fifteen-million-dollar profit on a six-hundred-thousand-dollar investment. Earlier, when young Malek was an aide in the Nixon White House, he was tasked to estimate the membership of what his boss deemed a "Jewish cabal" in the Bureau of Labor Statistics. He complied, no doubt with some misgivings. Still, as an experienced Jew-counter, he can undertake to insure that the Nationals don't get cluttered up with too many Hank Greenbergs or Sandy Koufaxes.

Even if Soros were the crazed left-winger his critics make him out to be, he would be as entitled as any crazed right-winger to own a piece of a ball club. But it may be worth noting that he is not. No private citizen on earth has done as much as Soros to open up closed societies in general and Communist ones in particular. He spent many tens of millions throughout the Soviet empire subsidizing civil-society organizations, independent media, and opposition groups, such as Charter 77, in Czechoslovakia, and Solidarity, in Poland. His foundations still devote some four hundred and fifty million dollars a year to the promotion of freedom and democracy around the world. At home, his largest single philanthropic effort goes to support after-school programs in New York City. All in all, so far, he has given away five billion dollars in the service of human betterment—$5.025 billion, if you count his role in last year's Presidential campaign. Like most billionaires, he has his crotchets. But he's not a bad fellow. And his presence in the Nationals owners' box might raise, ever so slightly, the moral tone of Major League Baseball, and of Bush league Washington, too.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

AROUND CITY HALL
THE PUBLIC WHAT?

It does not necessarily recommend the office of the public advocate that one of the candidates currently seeking the post counts as his chief reason for campaigning a wish to eliminate the position ("I promise to report to work just long enough to fire the staff and padlock the office," he says), while another intends to reduce the officeholder's salary by half and dispense with many of the subordinate employees. A third candidate (there are nine) just graduated from college and is apparently named Damon Cabbagestalk, Jr.

And yet the office holds so much promise! Despite the fact that hardly anyone seems to know much about it—in a recent poll, two-thirds of "likely voters" in the upcoming Democratic primary couldn't name the sitting advocate, Betsy Gotbaum—public advocate is the second-ranking post in the city, its occupant next in line to the mayor in case of emergency. The public advocate, basically, is the city's ombudsman, a watchdog to monitor city services and, according to Gotbaum's Web site, "to cut through government red tape." (Of course, it's the very idea of dedicating a government job specifically to cutting through government red tape that rankles some skeptics.) But the public advocate also presides over meetings of the City Council, breaking ties when necessary. And the public advocate can bring lawsuits against government officials, like the police commissioner, as Mark Green once did, and introduce legislation.

"It's a misunderstood, maligned office that actually has huge potential, because there are already tens of thousands of public advocates," Andrew Rasiej, a first-time candidate, said the other day, explaining his aim to "connect" New York's countless well-intentioned citizens—busybodies, to some. The city teems with them: the old woman in your apartment building who's always slipping notices under your door; the movie-theatre "shusher"; the guy in the drugstore who makes sure the other shoppers know that there's only one line; Bernie Goetz. Actually, Goetz, the infamous subway gunman turned vegetarian crusader, is running for advocate himself—he's the one who wants to institute the pay cut. Goetz's platform includes some truly inspired ideas (he's for midday power naps), some strangely banal ones (he'd like to see a "tall building" constructed somewhere "around Sixtieth Street"), and some that remind you why he can't possibly win (he believes that "N.Y.C. should relax more on security").

The peculiar mixture of anonymity and authority conferred by the job description makes the office an attractive target for the ambitious crossover artist. And so the other day Rasiej, who is the founder of Irving Plaza and a onetime technology consultant to Bill Clinton and How-

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ard Dean, positioned himself in front of City Hall, preparing to officially announce his candidacy, which is organized around the theme of connectivity: he advocates universal Wi-Fi access throughout the five boroughs, aboveground and below. Among the benefits that his plan would provide are better schools, blueprint-downloading capabilities for firemen on the go, and real-time subway-service alerts.

As he waited for a press conference to conclude inside, Rasiej demonstrated an appealing mixture of bravado (Gotbaum “won’t appear with me in public—the contrast is too great”) and defeatism (“She’s got the *Times* endorsement locked up”). He noted that City Hall Park offers wireless Internet, whereas City Hall does not—a condition no more sensible than “building I-95 and stopping a hundred yards short of the George Washington Bridge.”

Soon it was time to start. “I’m launching my political career,” he said, nervously biting a knuckle, and then he walked up to a lectern that had been fashioned from a stack of old computers. A crowd of supporters held “Rasiej for Public Advocate” signs. Only one sign—belonging to an intern named Emily—was upside down.

—*Ben McGrath*

FIGHTING WORDS
WHATEVER

Attempts to justify Russell Crowe’s assault on the night desk clerk at the Mercer Hotel last month came up short around here. Everyone sided with the humble clerk, who had taken a flying telephone to the cheek, and who, as the *Times* made sure to point out, lived in Brooklyn in a building with a broken buzzer and strips of peeling paint. In the court of public opinion, if not that of the judge, the movie star, with his millions, his quick temper, and his operational doorbell, hardly stood a chance, no matter how aggrieved he may have been.

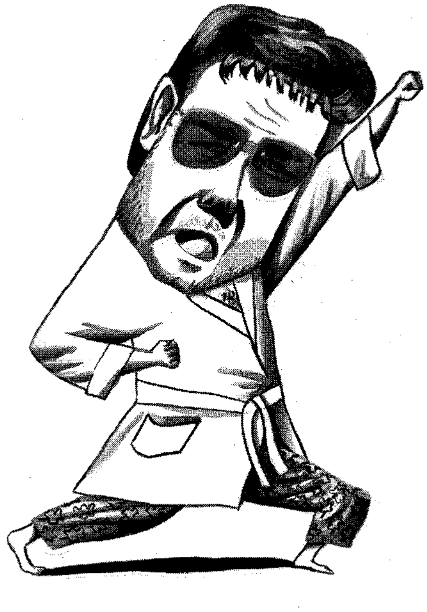
But then, in the *Post* last week, came a more detailed account. If it is to be believed—and why wouldn’t it be?—a Crowe partisan had cause to take up his case again, and even to advance a gospel of well-directed violence. The story, on Page Six, went like this: Crowe, up late and in his hotel room, was trying to place a call to his wife, back home in Australia. He was having difficulty doing so. He called the desk clerk, who failed to assist him. Crowe became angry. The clerk muttered something. Crowe said, “What’s your name? The clerk said, “Josh.” Crowe said, “Well, Josh, I’m coming down right now to kick your ass.” Crowe proceeded to the lobby, confirmed that the man behind the desk was indeed Josh, hurled a phone and a vase at him, took a bow, then assumed a karate stance, whether in anticipation of retaliation or for Oscar consideration it wasn’t clear. Enter the cops.

It might seem, from these particulars, that the villain would still have to be Crowe, but that is only if you ignore (as Crowe could not) what Josh (full name Nestor Estrada) muttered to him on the phone. What Josh said was “Whatever.”

Whatever—well, that changes everything. For some time now (at least ten years, since the movie “Clueless” popularized the “whatever” gesture, made with the thumb and forefinger of both hands, to form the letter “W”), “whatever” has been the bane of anyone trying to persuade an adversary or a child of something that this adversary or child would prefer not to be persuaded of. “Whatever” is as incendiary as it is nonchalant; the nonchalance is what makes it incendiary. “Whatever” turns disengagement into something withering and mean.

Fogey insurgencies have sprouted up, incited by moralists who regard the routine deployment of “whatever” as the ultimate symptom of indifference in the culture at large. (See “The Road to Whatever: Middle-Class Culture and the Crisis of Adolescence,” by Elliott Currie.) James Carroll, writing recently in the Boston *Globe*, cited Lynndie England, who, when she was urged to take part in the torture of prisoners at Abu Ghraib, replied, “O.K. Whatever.” Carroll declared, “A spirit of ‘whatever’ animates those much further up the US chain of command.”

Perhaps. But it’s hard to imagine that these notions crossed Russell Crowe’s mind as he sat in his hotel room at 4 A.M., telephone in hand. Probably he was attempting to come to terms with the knowledge that, on the question of dialing Australia, the young man on the line did not seem to share his sense of urgency. Unrequited sincerity can be hard to bear, even if you’re not prone to violence. For a man with a rough streak, “whatever” means war.



“The word immediately exhibits a complete lack of respect for your point of view or situation,” a biochemist named David Gilbert said last week. “It’s basically saying that your point of view is crap.” Gilbert’s expertise on the “whatever” matter arises not from his work with stem cells and DNA, at SUNY’s Upstate Medical University, in Syracuse, but from his role as the father of a fourteen-year-old girl. “Girls like to roll their eyes and say ‘Whatever,’ ” he said. “It pisses parents off more than anything.” Gilbert, who is forty-five, plays rhythm guitar and harmonica in an amateur blues band called the Residues. (From their Web site: “ ‘Residues’ are the molecular building blocks of larger molecules. . . . But some people think we are talking about bong water.”) Gilbert wrote a song for the Residues called “Whatever.” The verses consist of a father enumerating various pubescent violations—all-nighter, tattoo, pierced tongue—and a daughter’s inevitable response: whatever, whatever, whatever. The chorus goes, “Now I may be absurd, but I hate that word, whatever.” He has long dreamed that his song will one day wind up “in some B-grade teen movie, where Steve Martin is the dad.”

Gilbert hadn’t heard about the developments in the Crowe case, but, while he sympathizes with “whatever” victims everywhere, he generally favors a proportionate response. He said, “When it gets physical, of course, we can’t accept that.”

—*Nick Paumgarten*

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THE FINANCIAL PAGE
ALL THE OIL IN CHINA?

When the China National Offshore Oil Corporation, or CNOOC, made an $18.5-billion bid for the American oil company Unocal two weeks ago, topping a previous offer of $16.5 billion from Chevron, a political storm was inevitable. The Chinese government owns seventy per cent of CNOOC (pronounced "see-nook"), and, for many in Washington, China is a natural enemy in the making. Representative Joe Barton said that the deal "poses a clear threat to the energy and national security of the United States." Representative Richard Pombo prophesied "disastrous consequences." A host of congressmen argued that the Committee on Foreign Investments—a government body that vets corporate acquisitions by foreign companies with an eye toward national security—should investigate the deal.

Some of this hostility is a matter of simple protectionism. While the U.S. has historically been a leading advocate of free trade, foreign intrusions on American shores are rarely welcomed. The current flap calls to mind the outcry that greeted Sony's purchase of Columbia Pictures, in 1989—a precious national resource in the hands of the Japanese! But people find the oil deal particularly upsetting because it unites two of the age's greatest causes for anxiety: oil and China.

People are worried about oil because prices are high, demand (from China, in part) is up, and supply may be dwindling. The assumption is that if China buys natural-gas and oil reserves it gets stronger and America gets weaker. But that's not actually how the global oil market works. To begin with, Unocal is not "an American energy asset," as Representative Pombo said last week. The United States does not own or control Unocal and has no claim on the company's gas and oil reserves, which are dotted across the globe. And Unocal does not reserve its oil for American consumers. Like every other oil company, it sells to the highest bidder. In the end, its responsibility is to its shareholders, not to American national security, as some of Unocal's recent activities (such as working with the Taliban on a potential pipeline) might indicate.

More important, in today's world whether or not you own the means of oil production doesn't affect your access to the stuff. Oil trades in a world market, and every player buys and sells at effectively the same price. The United States, as a nation, does not own any oil companies, but Americans can still buy all the oil they need. (That may change someday, but, if it does, access to oil will be determined by whose army is strongest, not by whose name is on a lease.) Some congressmen have suggested that if CNOOC succeeds in its bid it will take Unocal's oil and send the oil to China alone. Even supposing CNOOC did this, it wouldn't affect American consumers. Unocal provides less than one per cent of the oil consumed in this country. Moreover, if Unocal's oil went exclusively to China, the Chinese would buy less oil from other producers, freeing up supplies for the American market. None of this would change the price of oil in the slightest.

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

A devious mind might suggest that, even if it makes no difference who owns Unocal, the deal ought to be blocked just to inconvenience China. But allowing Chinese companies into the American market makes both economic and strategic sense. It makes economic sense because markets work best when assets flow, without the interference of governments, to the people who value them most highly. (Currently, CNOOC values Unocal more than Chevron, the other bidder, does.) That's why the United States has so strenuously persuaded other countries to abandon protectionist policies and open their markets to foreign investment. In the past few years, the Bush Administration has pushed the Russian government to open its energy industry to foreign investment. And the United States has exerted tremendous pressure on China (albeit with limited success) to get it to improve its trading policies and allow foreign companies to run their own businesses free of state intervention. Blocking the Unocal deal would make it a lot harder down the road for the United States to get foreign countries to open up.

Quite apart from the free-market considerations, it's a good idea for the Unocal deal to proceed. In geopolitical terms, China may be a rival, but in economic terms it's one of our most important partners. The country is a favorite investment area for American companies, and American consumers reap enormous benefits from the low prices of Chinese goods. Above all, China is one of the world's biggest buyers of United States government bonds. Our government has been able to finance its huge deficits because of China's willingness to buy billions of dollars' worth of American debt. The irony of our worries about Unocal is that China could inflict far more damage on the American economy by selling off bonds, or simply ceasing to buy them, than by merely acquiring an oil company. If we're really concerned about American security, alienating the Chinese hardly seems like a smart move.

Worrying about the national-security implications of a foreign investment makes sense; no one would be happy to see China take control of Lockheed Martin. But a knee-jerk rejection of CNOOC's bid would do far more harm than the bid itself. Over the last three decades, as China has become more and more integrated into the global economy, it and the United States have become ever more dependent on each other. At this point, if one economy implodes, so will the other. China may ultimately turn out to be more competitor than partner, but for now interdependence is a lot better than open hostility. As the man said, keep your friends close, but keep your enemies closer.

—*James Surowiecki*

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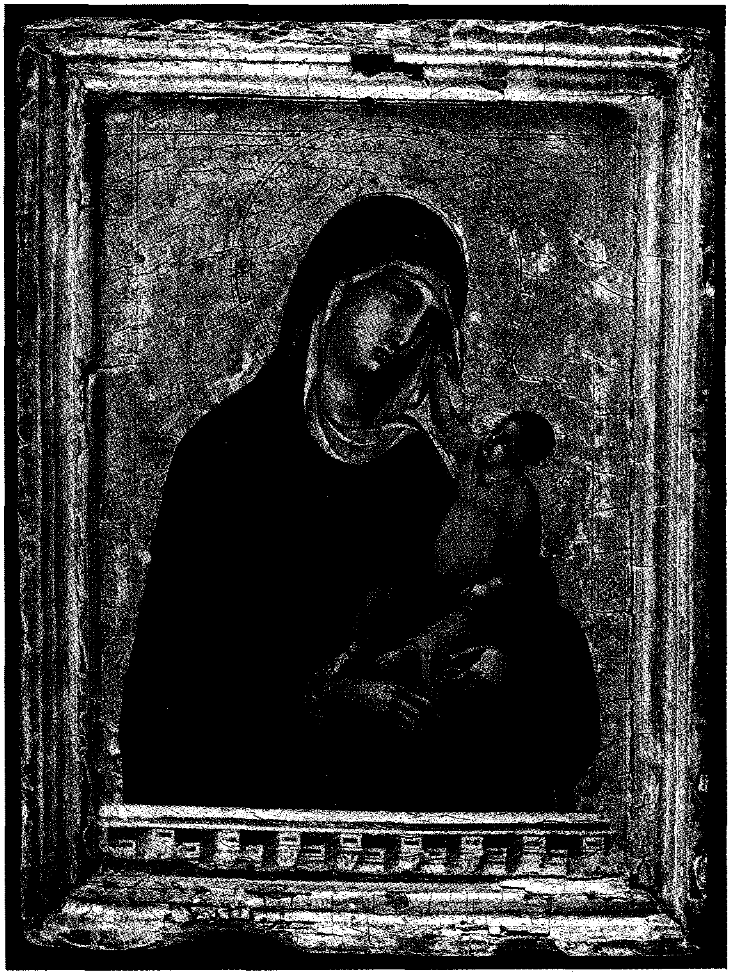
ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

THE MISSING MADONNA

The story behind the Met's most expensive acquisition.

BY CALVIN TOMKINS

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's recent purchase of an early Renaissance "Madonna and Child" by Duccio di Buoninsegna, for a price said to have been between forty-five and fifty million dollars, has been greeted by most New Yorkers with unruffled calm. Although the acquisition was covered extensively last November, with emphasis on the price and the extreme rarity of works by this Sienese master, the little picture (it measures eleven inches high by just over eight inches wide, and is painted in tempera and gold on a wooden panel) has not attracted the multitudes that would make it difficult to see. In 1963, when the "Mona Lisa" came to the Met for a month, more than a million people stood in long lines; but on a number of occasions this spring, when I went to look at the Duccio, I was the only person in the room. To be sure, thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italian paintings lack the popular clout of works by Leonardo or van Gogh, but you'd think more people would be curious about something that cost more than double what the Met had spent on any previous acquisition.



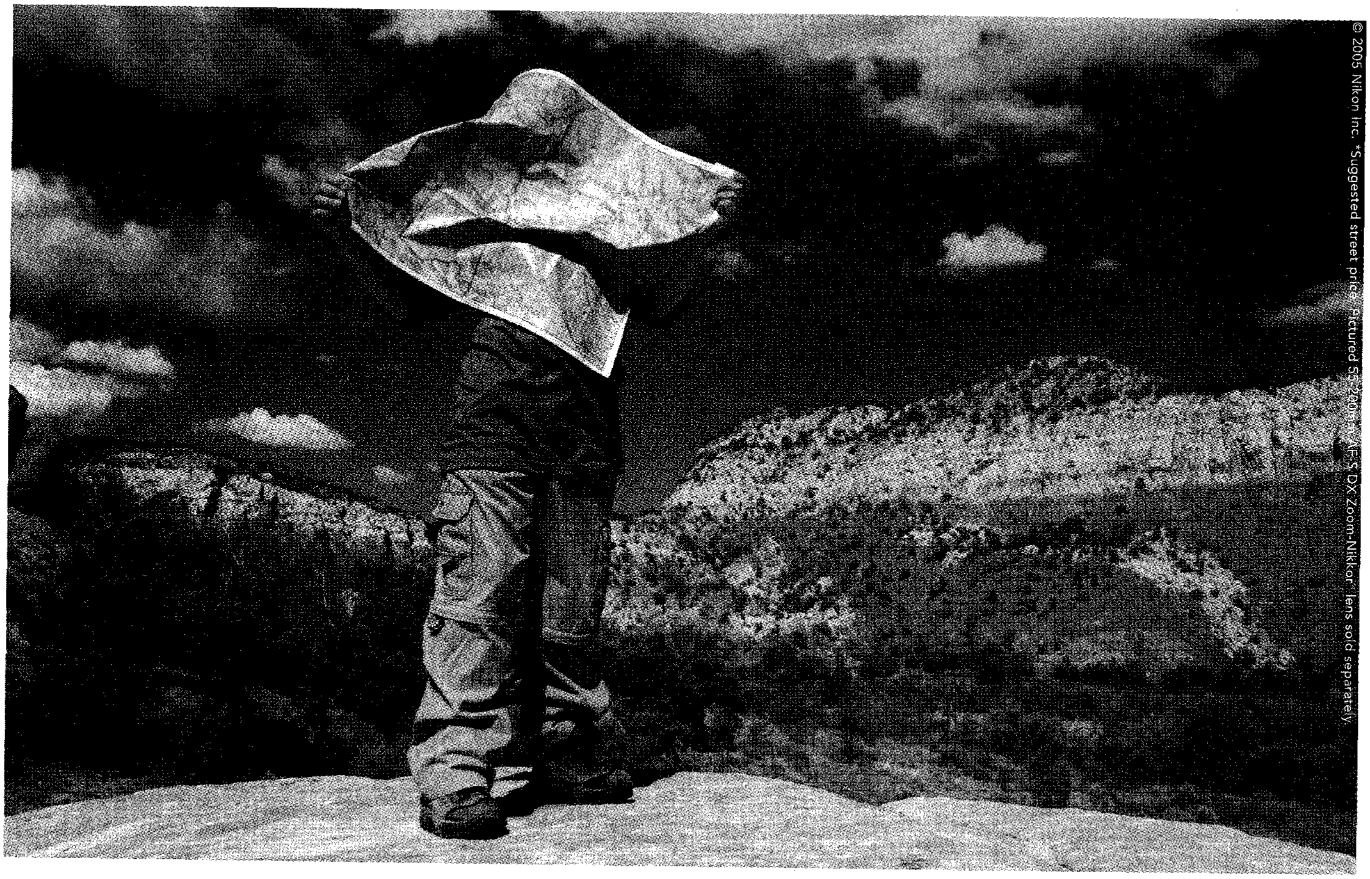
Bernard Berenson once called the Duccio "a treasure you should dive for."

COURTESY METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Small as it is, the painting has a powerful presence. It captures the eye from a distance, and commands, up close, something like complete attention. Holding the Christ child in her left arm, the Virgin looks beyond him with melancholy tenderness, while the child reaches out a tiny hand to brush aside her veil. Centuries of Byzantine rigidity and impersonal, hieratic forms are also brushed aside in this intimate gesture. We are at the beginning of what we think of as Western art; elements of the Byzantine style still linger—in the gold background, the Virgin's boneless and elongated fingers, and the child's unchildlike features—but the colors of their clothing are so miraculously preserved, and the sense of human interaction is so convincing, that the two figures seem to exist in a real space, and in real time. Candle burn marks on the frame, which is original, testify to the picture's use as a private devotional image. It is dated circa 1300.

Although the "Madonna and Child" was well known in art-historical circles as the only one of Duccio's dozen or so surviving paintings to remain in private hands, its whereabouts had been uncertain since the death, in 1949, of its last registered owner, the Belgian collector Adolphe Stoclet. In fact, the picture never left the Stoclet house in Brussels. Stoclet and his wife, who died within a week of each other, had willed the house and much of their collection, including the Duccio, to their son, Jacques, whose widow held on to it until her death, in 2001. Soon after that, her heirs (four daughters), who are very high on anonymity, agreed to lend it to an important exhibition in Siena of Duccio and his school. A color-plate reproduction of the picture—the first one ever made—was printed in the exhibition catalogue, but a few weeks before the opening, in 2003, the painting was withdrawn. This coincided with rumors of an impending sale, which turned out to be true.

Although everyone involved in the transaction is bound by *omertà*, it is known that both Sotheby's and Christie's, the principal auction houses, engaged in lengthy and fiercely competitive negotiations with the heirs, and Christie's eventually won the prize. "The family was very keen that the painting go to a public museum or institution," according to Nicholas Hall, international director of Christie's Old Master department. This was one reason that the family decided upon a private "treaty" sale, in which the auction house and the seller determine a price and then offer the work to selected potential buyers, rather than letting it take its chances at public auction; another reason was that a private sale is more private. "We got it by putting a significantly higher valuation on the painting than anyone else—by multiples—based on its being the last Duccio in private hands and its being so impeccably preserved," Hall told me. Hall himself never met the sellers. "The contract doc-



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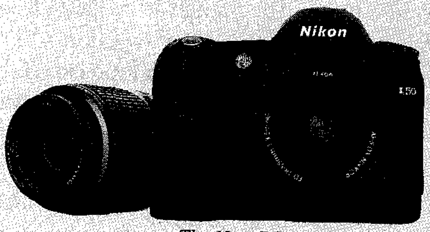

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ument must have been four inches thick, and it was the most rigidly controlled transaction I've ever been involved in," he said. "At times, it didn't seem they were too keen to sell at all. I really have no idea what went into their thinking."

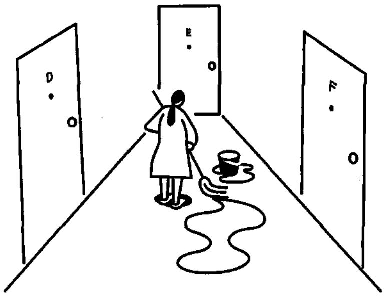
One day last August, Hall had lunch at Serafina's, on Madison Avenue, with his friend Keith Christiansen, the curator in charge of Old Master paintings at the Met. "This is going to be the most expensive pizza you've ever had," Hall said, handing over an envelope that contained a high-resolution color transparency of Duccio's "Madonna and Child," and a lavish presentation booklet that Christie's had prepared for prospective buyers. Christiansen, a tall, energetic man who clearly finds endless enjoyment in his work, brought these items back to his office at the Met, and took some very deep breaths.

Two years earlier, the Met had paid twelve million dollars for a small, surpassingly beautiful "Crucifixion" by Pietro Lorenzetti, one of Duccio's pupils and followers. Christiansen had thought that this would be the best picture he ever recommended to the trustees in his years at the Met, where he has been since 1977. (His official title there is Jayne Wrightsman Curator of European Paintings.) The possibility of acquiring a work by Duccio then had seemed infinitely remote. There was only one in New York, the "Temptation of Christ on the Mountain," at the Frick Collection; like the Duccios at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., the Kimbell Museum, in Fort Worth, and a few other museums around the country, the Frick painting is a fragment cut from the predella to the "Maestà," Duccio's towering masterpiece in Siena, which shows the Virgin enthroned ("in majesty") and surrounded by saints. Boston's Museum of Fine Arts and London's National Gallery both possess freestanding triptychs attributed to Duccio, although parts of each are believed to have been painted by his workshop assistants. Expert opinion diverges on the degree of workshop contributions to several of the surviving works by Duccio, but only one scholar, the Swiss art historian Florens Deuchler, has ever questioned the attribution of the "Madonna and Child." (Deuchler places the painting, which he has never seen, among works from "the orbit of Duccio"; he doesn't say why, and the fact that he includes several other long-accepted Duccios in the same category leads Christiansen and others to describe his scholarship as "eccentric.") Everyone else has accepted the picture as a signature work, complete in itself, and painted by Duccio's own hand. Bringing it to the Met, in Christiansen's words, "would transform the collection."

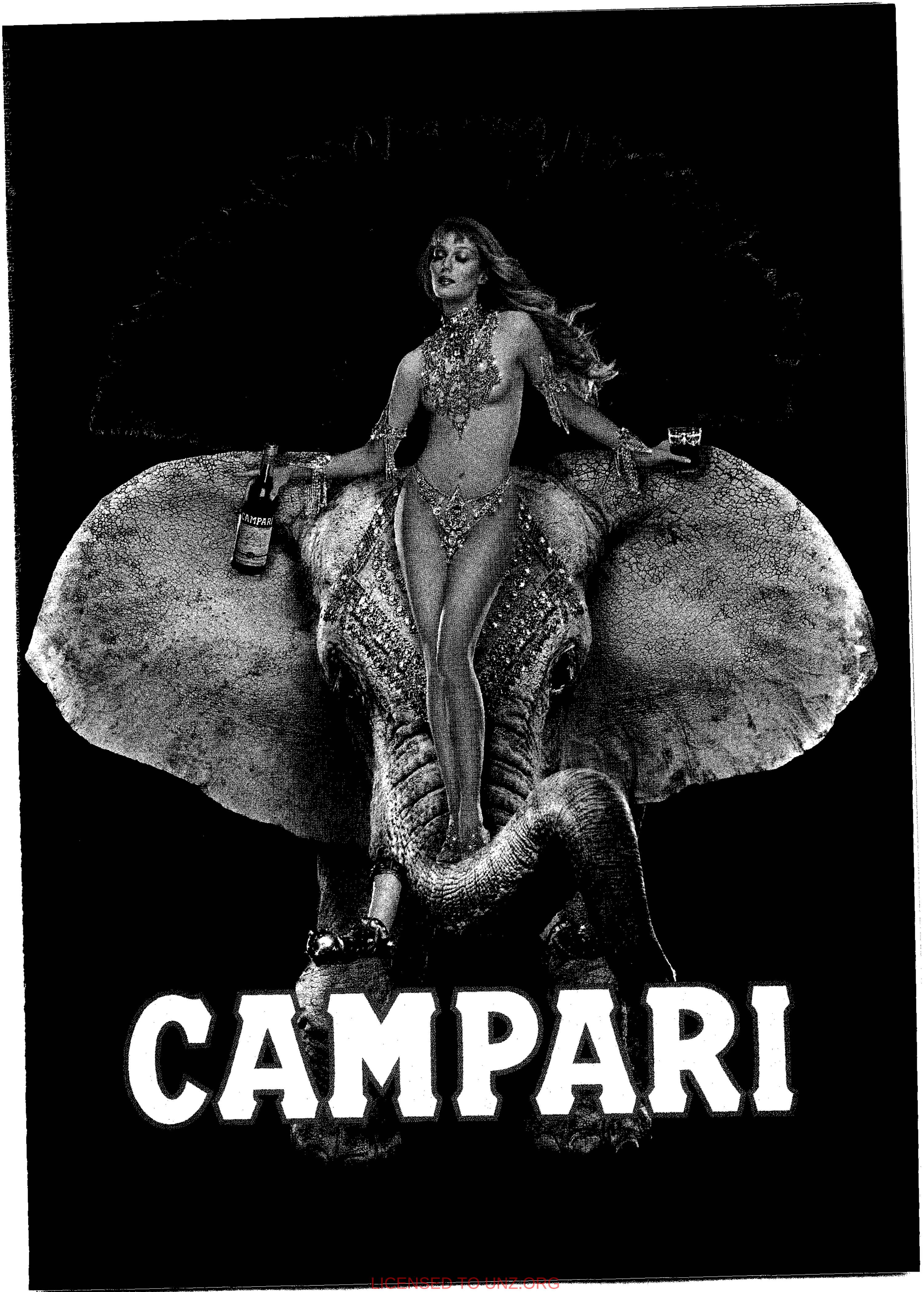
Duccio's fame and influence in fourteenth-century Siena were as great as Giotto's in Florence, but, throughout the long and sometimes warring rivalry between these two city-states, history, power, and publicity favored the Florentines. By the sixteenth century, Duccio's name was largely forgotten outside Siena. Giorgio Vasari, whose "Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects" was published in 1568, extolled the great Rucellai Madonna, which Duccio had painted on commission for the Santa Maria Novella church in Florence, and which now hangs in the Uffizi; he called it a pivotal work that left behind the "Greek" (Byzantine) manner and took the first step toward the modern style, but he attributed the painting to Cimabue, Giotto's predecessor and teacher. Vasari devoted only a brief entry in his book to Duccio, and got his dates wrong.

The rediscovery of Duccio and other forgotten masters, spurred by the pioneering scholarship of Bernard Berenson and others, had gained considerable momentum by the close of the nineteenth century. Early Renaissance paintings, known then as "primitives," were increasingly admired, and in 1904 an important exhibition of "Antica Arte Senese" was held in Siena. A week or so before it opened, Corrado Ricci, the principal organizer, received a letter from a friend of his, saying that the "likeable and intelligent collector from Rome Count Gregorio Stroganoff" had two pictures that he would like to be included in the exhibition. One was an "Annunciation" by Simone Martini. The other was a small "Madonna and Child" by Duccio—the painting that now belongs to the Met. It was too late to get Stroganoff's pictures into the exhibition catalogue, but both of them were in the show. Mary Logan Berenson, Bernard's wife, writing about the exhibition for the influential Paris publication *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, took special note of the Duccio. "Perhaps the most perfect work" on view, she wrote, "is the little Madonna of Duccio belonging to Count Gregory Stroganoff . . . which, small as it is, offers so much majesty, dignity, and profound sentiment."

Stroganoff was a wealthy Russian expatriate who had lived in Rome for most of his mature life. His main interest lay in his art collection, which filled his large palazzo on the Via Sistina. He particularly liked Italian pictures of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and he seems to have known a good deal about them, although his level of connoisseurship was perhaps not quite as high as his close friend Antonio Muñoz suggests in the catalogue of the Stroganoff collection. Muñoz would have us believe that the Count found his Duccio in an antique shop "in Tuscany," had it restored, and personally identified it as a work by Duccio. Keith Christiansen thinks it more likely that the Count bought the painting from a Roman dealer. There are no documents on its provenance, at any rate, so we will never know, any more than we will know whom it was painted for originally, or where it had been for the previous six hundred years. This is not at all unusual for early Renaissance pictures, according to Christiansen. "We don't know who the Boston triptych was painted for, or the London triptych," he told me. "The Lorenzetti 'Crucifixion' that we bought two years ago was acquired in the nineteenth century by the French artist Paul Delaroche, who thought it was by Giotto." The fact that the Duccio "Madonna and Child" is so well preserved suggests, however, that it has passed through relatively few hands since 1300. "It wouldn't be completely out of the question that the same family passed it down," Christiansen said.



When Stroganoff died, in 1910, he left no legal instructions regarding his collection. An Italian art historian named Verduì Kalpakcian, who has done research on Stroganoff, writes that the Count had a married daughter, Princess Maria Gregorievna Scerbatoff, who conveyed all rights of inheritance to her grown son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#15 "La Stella Grande" Campari® 24% alc/vol (48 proof) Imported by SKYY Spirits, LLC, San Francisco, CA ©2005 www.campariusa.com and daughter, Vladimir and Aleksandra. These two wrote a letter in 1911 to the director of The Hermitage, in St. Petersburg, saying that, as their grandfather had wished, they were bequeathing two of his paintings to the museum—Simone Martini's "Annunciation," one of the two pictures that the old Count had put into the 1904 exhibition in Siena, and a "Tabernacle" by Fra Angelico. Stroganoff's grandchildren subsequently gave The Hermitage two more Italian paintings, but Duccio's "Madonna and Child" stayed in Rome. The Scerbatoff family moved back to Russia before 1912, and when the Revolution broke out, in 1917, they were trapped there. Maria, Vladimir, and Aleksandra were killed by the Bolsheviks in 1920, at the family estate in St. Petersburg. Vladimir's widow managed to escape Russia with two young daughters: Olga, born in 1915, and Maria, born a year later. The three of them made their way to Rome, where, in a scene right out of an Ernst Lubitsch film, a loyal former employee of the old tsarist embassy offered them a tearful welcome and handed over the keys to the Via Sistina palazzo.

THE INDIVISIBLES

They exist: atoms,
components, letters, vertebrae.
It exists: the totality of it,
historical spine, the universal
discourse of space
composed of numerals
causal and oblique as berry pickers
scouring the thickets of the mind
which is the wind and so
windmills to crush the berries
and flavor the wonderful
bread with jam at breakfast.
Sun up, the world begins
and it is composed
of energy and matter
like pigs in blankets or eggs
in cartons despite the odds.
Cities rise to face the dawn,
lathes, potter's wheels, smoke
from the censers of hilltop temples,
the mind chasing a wagon of illumination
through the mechanical universe,
dutiful dog, eager and oblivious
as the worm in time's apple
or the kid telling jokes
in the planetarium
the instant after the lights go out
and before the stars turn on.

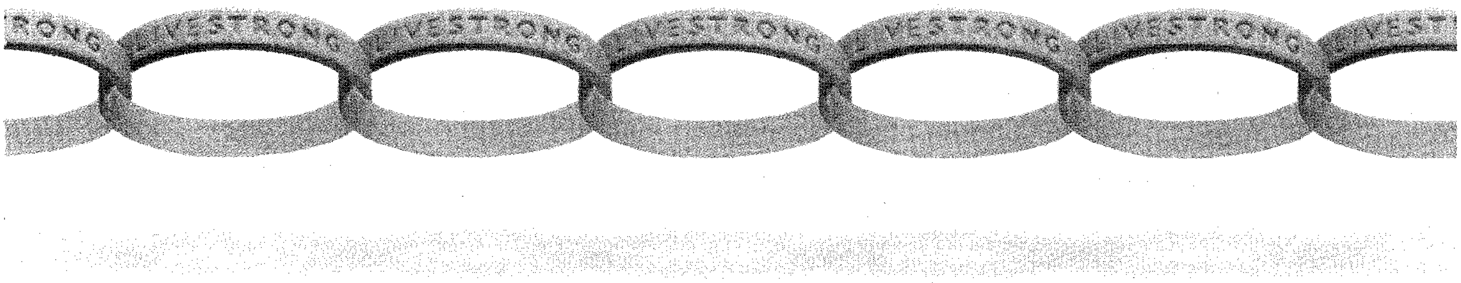
—*Campbell McGrath*

Having no other means of support, the surviving Scerbatoffs started selling the furniture and the art. Bernard Berenson, who had formed a lucrative advisory partnership with the dealer Joseph Duveen, knew the Stroganoff collection well. In 1922, he cabled Duveen a list of Stroganoff pictures for possible purchase, with Duccio's "Madonna" at the top of the list. A Duveen agent went to the palazzo to look at Berenson's recommendations, and reported unfavorably on the Duccio. "Very small and ineffective," he called it, and, more to the point, "nothing for America." Although the Scerbatoffs cut the price from five hundred thousand lire to four hundred thousand (approximately twenty thousand dollars), Duveen knew that the tastes of his American clients—the ones Berenson called "squillionaires"—ran to large, colorful paintings, and he declined to buy it. The picture was still unsold early in 1923, according to correspondence in the Duveen files, but soon after that it was acquired, through the Sangiorgi auction house, in Rome, by the Stoclet family, in Brussels.

Adolphe Stoclet, the son of a rich Belgian banker, had had the wit or the good fortune to marry a niece of the Belgian painter Alfred Stevens, who lived in Paris and knew Manet and Whistler. Suzanne Stevens and Adolphe soon became ardent patrons of the avant-garde in theatre and music. In Milan, where they lived from 1896 to 1902, they developed a passion for the opera and for buying Italian paintings, especially early ones. From Milan, they moved to Vienna for two years, and then, in 1904, they returned to Brussels, where, having come into a large inheritance from Adolphe's father, they engaged the Viennese architect Josef Hoffmann to build them a grand house in the Wiener Werkstätte style of Art Nouveau. The murals and mosaics in their dining room were painted by Gustav Klimt. Diaghilev, Stravinsky, Cocteau, and other modernist luminaries attended their soirées and admired their proliferating art collection. Like most large-scale collectors of early Italian art, the Stoclets picked up some fakes here and there, including a small "Maestà" that they thought was by Duccio. (It was later traced to a master Sienese restorer and forger named Federico Joni.)

"Everything the Stoclets collected was something you could hold in your hand, small and precious," I was told by Everett Fahy, the head of the European Paintings Department at the Metropolitan. Fahy visited the Stoclet house in 2002, to negotiate with one of Jacques Stoclet's four daughters for the Duccio's loan (later rescinded) to the 2003 exhibition in Siena. The painting, he said, still hung then where it always had, in Adolphe Stoclet's private studio.

Reënter Bernard Berenson. In 1933, the depth of the Depression, Berenson sent a letter to Edward Fowles, the Duveen associate he trusted more than anyone else in the firm. "Now as for Stoclet," he wrote, "I should deplore his having to sell. If he does sell, I naturally want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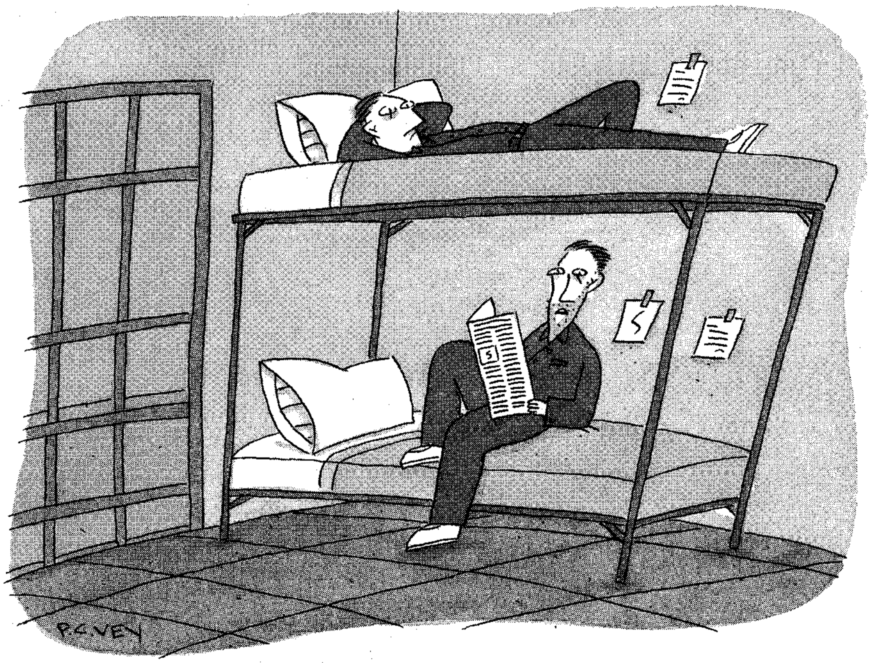
you to buy. First and foremost the little Duccio 'Madonna' from the Stroganoff collection. It is the very loveliest and yet the most characteristic thing he ever did, I doubt whether a more precious painting of a primitif exists. It is a treasure you should dive for, and let no one snatch away." Things moved at a more leisurely pace in those days. Duveen's agent didn't get around to scouting the Stoclet collection until 1936, and then, in a letter to Uncle (the code name for Joseph Duveen; Berenson's was Doris), he dismissed the Duccio. The condition was unsatisfactory, this singularly myopic individual wrote, "and there was no colour left in the picture." Whatever financial considerations may (or may not) have led Stoclet to think of selling his Duccio, Duveen again decided against trying to buy it, and that, according to Keith Christiansen, was very good news indeed. "Duveen would unquestionably have ripped off the frame," he said, "and sent the picture to somebody to brighten it up." Aside from Stroganoff's early restoration and some minor later interventions, the painting has never suffered the shocks and abrasions that market-driven restorers can so assiduously inflict.

Christiansen had this and a lot more information in mind last fall, when Philippe de Montebello, the Metropolitan's director, returned from vacation and was immediately shown the Duccio transparency. "When he heard what the asking price was, he sort of blanched, and said, 'Where am I going to find the money?' " Christiansen recalls. "But you know Philippe. If he wants something, and the trustees know he wants it—I had no doubt that the funds could be found." In twenty-eight years as the Met's director, de Montebello has acquired, along with countless works of art, a huge reservoir of suave personal authority. "I was just smitten by the transparency, as anyone would be," he told me, "and I decided we had to go and look at this picture." This meant going to the London office of Christie's, where the Duccio was held. "I knew it was something we could pull off and something we must pull off," he said. "After all, the Met is the institution that bought the Velázquez 'Juan de Pareja' "—in 1970, for $5.5 million—"and Rembrandt's 'Aristotle with a Bust of Homer,' " in 1961, for $2.3 million. He didn't mention Jasper Johns's "White Flag," for which the Met paid something more than twenty million dollars in 1998—the museum's most expensive acquisition until Duccio. Auction records keep being broken for more than that, of course; Picasso's Rose Period "Boy with a Pipe" went for a hundred and four million dollars at Sotheby's in 2004. For de Montebello, the Duccio's price was almost incidental. "It's not what you pay for the important things that people remember," he said. "But, if you don't buy them, it's forever, and that's unacceptable."



"Wow—the house I was using as a hideout has tripled in value since I was arrested."

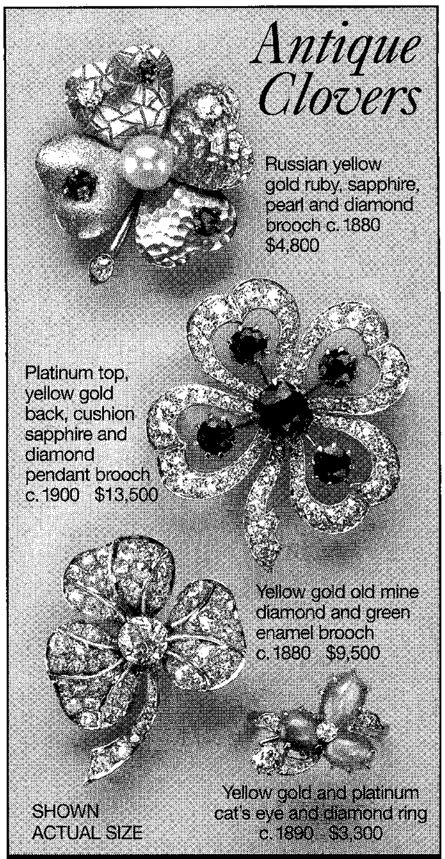
The Duccio was being offered not only to the Met. The Getty Museum, in Los Angeles, had already turned it down, reportedly because of the price. This struck Christiansen as ironic, because the price was so clearly predicated on the fifty-five million dollars that the Getty had agreed to pay, two years earlier, for Raphael's small, perfectly preserved "Madonna of the Pinks." The British government temporarily denied that picture an export permit, to give English buyers a chance to come up with the necessary funds; they did, and the Raphael is now in London's National Gallery. (There would be no export problems for the Duccio, because its owners were Belgian, and the relatively lenient Belgian laws on exporting art apply mainly to architecture and furniture.) The Met's only serious rival at this point was the Louvre. The Louvre, like the Metropolitan, had no Duccio to anchor its glorious collection of early Italian art, and its acquisition money, from museum funds and private sources as well as from the French government, were eminently tappable.

De Montebello, Christiansen, and Dorothy Mahon, the museum's head of paintings conservation, flew to London on September 24th. They spent two hours with the little painting. They held it in their hands, and examined the surface with a ten-inch magnifier. Its state of preservation amazed them. The colors of all Renaissance paintings have altered to some degree over time, especially the blues, which often become formless black shapes with no visible definition. In this case, the modelling of the folds in the Virgin's deep-blue mantle was largely intact. Duccio had used a high-quality blue made from azurite, Mahon told me later, after she and her colleagues had analyzed the picture in the Met's conservation studio. "The buildup was so skillfully done," Mahon said, "with different colors of azurite and then lead white in the final one." (White is more resistant to chemical change than dark colors are.) Seeing the painting at Christie's was enough to convince de Montebello. "There was not an ounce of doubt in my mind about it," he told me. A sense of urgency—he was aware that his colleagues at the Louvre had already been to see the painting—led him to make an offer on the spot, an offer that was, he indicated, close to the asking price.

The director's move stunned Christiansen. "I never expected that he would make an offer," he said. "I thought this was the first phase—normally, we would return, he'd talk to the trustees, and of course you'd try to get the picture here, but that was out of the question. The picture wasn't leaving Christie's until the whole deal was finished." De Montebello concedes that he moved much faster than he normally would have. "Technically, I was not authorized to make an offer," he explained. He had talked to several key members of the board, though, and, as he put it, "I just took a chance that my trustees would go along, and they did. But my offer was to Christie's. They were going to relay it to the seller the following week, so I knew I would have time, and in fact by the time they relayed it to the seller I had already got the approval of my trustees." (Note the recurrent modifier here: *my* trustees.) De Montebello dispatched several of his trustees to London to look at the painting, and he made sure that as many others as possible had a chance to hear Christiansen talk about it. Christiansen's eloquence on the subject is torrential. He views the little painting as a decisive step in the evolution of Duccio's style, which reached its apogee about eight years later in the "Maestà" altarpiece. As he put it to me, "It's part of the whole revolution in expression that takes place in the late thirteenth century and early fourteenth century—the revolution which of course has as its real figurehead neither Duccio nor Giotto but Dante. Dante is an absolute contemporary of Giotto, and a near-contemporary of Duccio, he's writing at exactly the same time, and he even made a scene with Giotto and Cimabue in 'The Divine Comedy.' The fact that Dante chose to write in the vernacular, in Italian rather than Latin, is one of the turning points of the West. And this is precisely what these artists were about as well—finding a vernacular as opposed to an intentionally élitist, anti-popular form of painting. This is the real thing; painting is no longer an illustration but something that attempts to evoke a human response from the viewer."

Although the purchase would put a large dent in the Met's acquisition funds for years to come, de Montebello reports that some trustees told him, "If you have to pay more to get it, pay more." Thomas Hoving, who preceded de Montebello as the Metropolitan's director, might be pained to hear that. A brilliant showman and acquisitor—the Velázquez "Juan de Pareja" came in on his watch—Hoving was on the verge of acquiring a Duccio of his own in 1976, a very beautiful "Crucifixion." It was being put up for auction at Christie's in London by the widow of the Earl of Crawford, whose family had owned it for generations, and the museum's acquisitions committee authorized Hoving to go up to $3.15 million in bidding for it. The trustees then changed their minds and voted to rescind the authorization. Hoving, who was out of the country at the time, was enraged. When he got back to New York, he called Douglas Dillon, the president of the Met's board of trustees, and said, "I quit." Dillon insisted that he stay on for a year, until the transition (to de Montebello) was worked out. "The Crucifixion" was bought in 1976 for a million pounds, and is now hanging in the Manchester Art Gallery, in England, but it is no longer attributed to Duccio. As Christiansen explained, "A large number of Duccio specialists believe, and I think correctly, that this is by the Duccio pupil and follower whom we call the Master of Città di Castello."

Duccio's "Madonna and Child" went on view at the Metropolitan last December, as the centerpiece of a second-floor gallery containing the Lorenzetti "Crucifixion" and other early Italian pictures from the collection. It was removed temporarily on June 13th and taken to the Conservation Department for intensive study and possibly some very minor repairs. "I feel that only the least should be done to a picture," Dorothy Mahon said to me. "Only what's absolutely necessary." The painting will be back on July 12th. You can scarcely fault de Montebello for attaching his favorite modifier to the new acquisition. "It's the single most important purchase during my twenty-eight years as director," he said. "It's my 'Juan de Pareja,' it's my 'Aristotle.' " De Montebello was quite touched that, among the many congratulatory letters the museum has received about the painting, there was one to him from Hoving. He was even more touched by the letter from a visitor he had never met, who wrote, "Finally, the Met has its 'Mona Lisa.' " ♦



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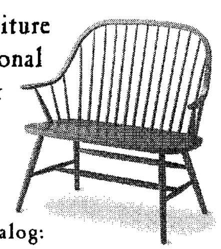

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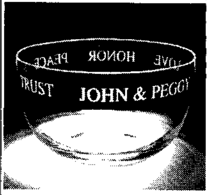

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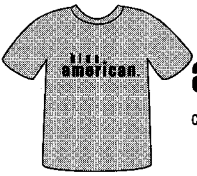

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SQUARE ONE

BY IAN FRAZIER

Correction: In last week's newsletter, the title of our lead article, "THE DEMOCRATS: HERE DO WE GO FROM WHERE?," contained errors caused by faulty typesetting. We at Democratic Party headquarters deeply regret any misunderstanding this caused. The correct title should have read, "THE DEMOCRATS: DO WE WHERE GO HERE FROM IS THIS RIGHT LORENZO?"

Also, in the first column of the article a paragraph was left out because of somebody's lunch being on it. Without this part, some of the fine points of the author's argument were lost. The omitted paragraph is as follows:

> And while I'm tipping over the applecart, I might as well voice another tentative possible caveat about the President that may well bear looking into. It's simply that the way President Bush acts sometimes might make people in foreign countries not like us. With his swaggering, "cowboy" behavior, the President might alienate some of the Europeans, in particular, who as we know have a proud culture of their own. Certainly even a skeptic will concede that could conceivably occur. I agree that most of the countries in question are awfully far away, as a quick glance at an atlas will attest. You will get no argument from me on that. So, you say, what is there to worry about? You may well be right. Actually, this may not be the problem I thought it was.

Another important paragraph in the article was dropped because we don't exactly know why. In it the author mounted a strongly worded criticism of the Republican Administration which did not even spare those at the very top. Some readers may have thought that the lines had been cut deliberately because the editors bowed to official pressure, but this is not the case. We will now run the paragraph herewith just as it appeared in the original:

> During the last Presidential debate, I am told, President Bush referred to "the Internets" (plural). When I heard of this mistake I had to laugh, for two reasons. First, because it tended to confirm what I have begun to suspect—namely, that the President possesses an intellect that is sometimes less than first rate (disrespectful as such a statement may sound). Secondly, I got a kick out of President Bush's unconscious betrayal of his unfamiliarity with the new technology. The Internet (not "nets," please note) is *the* great modern communication tool; in addition, it offers a large amount of information at one's fingertips.

We are aware that the above opinions may anger some readers. We apologize. If we get enough negative response, the next time we see the author we will mention to him that he should soften his arguments (especially where he implies that Bush isn't smart). Because we Democrats are also democrats with a small "d," we carefully value the wishes of each individual, even those with whom we don't agree, in the spirit of bipartisanship.

As we were remarking to Jane Fonda the other day, our party has fallen woefully out of touch with the feelings of average Americans. The author mentioned this point in the newsletter article, but not enough, and we would like to emphasize it even more. Quite simply, in 2004 we forgot our roots as Democrats. We forgot that ordinary people share the same basic desires. They want better lives for themselves and their children; they want jobs, and decent pay for honest work; and they want drug companies not to be sued for selling medicines that cause brain damage—aspirations common to people all over America and, indeed, all over the world.

Nor was that the limit of our failings. The article didn't go into the worst of them, because the author was probably scared to. But they're going to come out sooner or later, so why hide the facts anymore? During the 2004 campaign, a great many of us Democrats drank—heavily. We smoked, also. The air in the Kerry campaign bus would make your eyes tear. Reporters didn't mention this, because the Democratic National Committee begged them not to. Also, we shoplifted a lot of stuff. Ask storekeepers in Boston what it was like during the Convention, when, God forgive us, we picked those poor jerks clean. The motorcycle Kerry rode, in those photos? Stolen from a guy. He had outstanding warrants, so he didn't go to the police.

On top of that, we were really horrible to our spouses. While engaged in the campaign, we called home every night—not to ask our husband or wife how his or her day had been but, rather, to whine and moan about how tired *we* were, and how *hard* we were working, and how *mean* Teresa Heinz Kerry had been to us, and how we hadn't had anything to eat since yesterday but a *bagel*, and how the foam-rubber pillows in the motel aggravated our *allergies*, and boohoohoo wretched miserable *us*, without asking one single question of our long-suffering husband or wife, who was keeping everything together at home, dealing with kids and homework and lessons and exterminators and mildew guys, and he or she couldn't even point out our incredible selfishness because that would be descending to our level and *someone* had to be the grownup or the whole situation would shatter into a million pieces. And all the while that we were going on like five-year-olds, the ordinary Americans whom we didn't and don't know the feelings of were standing not ten feet away from us in the lobby talking to Karl Rove.

Then, when it would have done us some actual political *good* to cry, what did we do? We clammed up. Sure, a couple of senators almost wept while voting in favor of the war in Iraq, and Kerry managed a sniffle or two during the campaign. We took only hesitant steps, when the situation called for boldness. The country needed to see Kerry really turn on the waterworks, blubbering unashamedly and dabbing his eyes with his necktie and pulling out a hankie the size of a laundry bag and blowing a heartfelt, robust honk to show he wasn't aloof. We could have reached out like that to people, but we missed our chance.

Look, we're going to level with you. (And this goes beyond the article we were doing corrections for, messed up as it was. Forget about the article now—it's not that important.) We Democrats are a complete disaster. We have made a hash of our party and of our lives—yes, a stinky, ten-day-old corned-beef hash that even the cat won't touch. Back to square one. Sheep-dip and apple butter. *Help us, please!* On our wrist is a MedicAlert bracelet with name, affiliation, and Donald Rumsfeld's telephone number. Rummy—Condi, whoever—we surrender! Where do we sign? We're face down on the pavement, arms and legs spread. You want to destroy the environment? We never noticed it that much anyway. Abortion? Do as you think best. Social Security? Hey, you're the man—we just live here. Evolution? It *doesn't* make much sense, now that you mention it. Seventeen thousand a year at Wal-Mart suits us fine. Mind if we help ourselves to these hors d'oeuvres?

It is interesting to note that our Democratic Party has traditionally done better in years beginning with an "R." I can't think of any examples of this right now, but I know I've come across it in the literature. Franklin Roosevelt, of course, is the exception that proves the rule, being a Republican. Or maybe a Democrat—I forget which. At any rate, he had to be one or the other because the Whig Party had been dissolved by then. History is a fascinating thing. The other day I was reading an old book and it said that back in the nineteen-hundreds there was another President named Bush. The only difference between

Hello, I'm Jack Welch. Since buying the Democratic Party, two months ago, I have had to fire literally thousands of people like those responsible for the above. I include their babblings here only as an example of the kind of incompetence, waste, and mismanagement that will no longer be tolerated in the Democratic Party. The new Democratic Party will be lean and . . . what's the other thing? Goes with "lean"? Oh, hell, you know. Rhymes with it. I *know* it, God damn it! Why can't I think of it? Schumer! *Schumer!* Get your lazy butt in here! Now, God damn it, Schumer, I want you to find whoever is responsible for my not knowing what rhymes with "lean" and fire his behind out the door. Tell him just get his stuff and get out. Call security and make sure he doesn't take any office supplies.

That's the kind of no-nonsense approach you can expect in the new, non-incompetent Democratic Party with me in charge. During the coming months, keep your eyes and ears open for many changes. There will be an attractive new logo, plus illustrative icons, online banking, and other innovations. A new Democratic Party, fit to compete in the environment it has to compete in. And—best of all—run by me.

From now on, send all contributions to my place in New York. ♦

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THE PLAYERS

A new generation makes a card game a career choice.

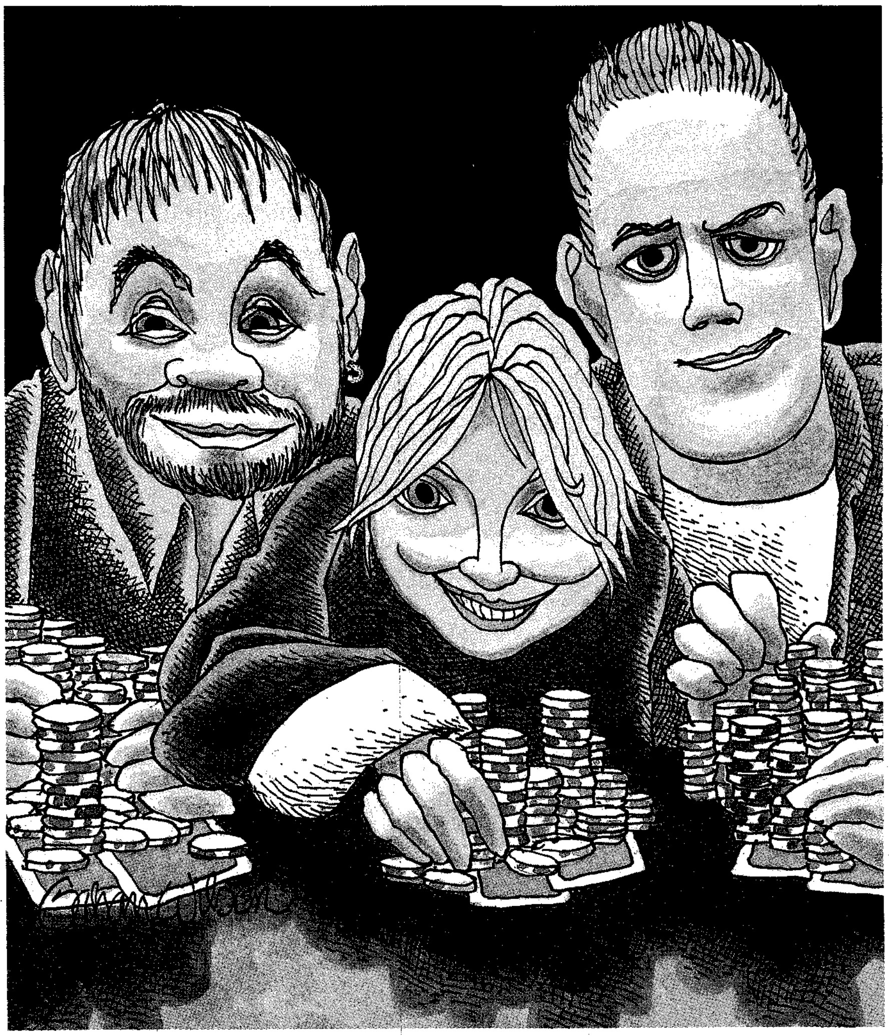
BY KEVIN CONLEY

Erick Lindgren doesn't lock the doors of his home, which is in a gated community in North Las Vegas. This way, his friends, who are mostly professional poker players, like him, can drop in anytime, to swim, shoot hoops, play snooker, or watch sports on a sixty-one-inch projection television—or on any of six smaller plasma screens—in his living room. Lindgren's place is a bachelor pad in the literal sense: it's usually filled with single men. On my first visit, in December, several young Swedes and Danes, in town for the Five Diamond World Poker Classic tournament at the Bellagio casino, sprawled on a vast sectional couch in Lindgren's living room, tracking N.F.L. bets on their laptops and playing online poker. Lindgren, a beefy, blond twenty-eight-year-old from Burney, California, sat at a pedestal desk in the middle of the room. He was wearing flip-flops, a T-shirt, and baby-blue pajama bottoms, and was simultaneously watching the football lineup on the seven TVs and playing online poker.

On a Saturday evening in May, by contrast, the mood in the room was almost ascetic. Lindgren's friend Daniel Negreanu, a thirty-year-old Canadian player who writes frequently about poker and is currently ranked No. 1 in lifetime tournament earnings by the Hendon Mob Poker Database, a Web site that gathers statistics about the game, sat on the couch leafing through a Swedish poker magazine that included a translation of one of his columns: "Den största pott jag någonsin förlorat" ("The Biggest Pot I've Ever Lost"). Negreanu, who is pale and lean, with a scruffy Caesar cut that he colors blond, laughed and read the title aloud in a convincing Swedish singsong; he can imitate anyone he's played with, which, he says, gives him a feel for how an opponent thinks. Soon, Lindgren showed up, to take a shower. He had just lost seventy thousand dollars in a golf game—by playing for ten thousand a hole—against his friend Phil Ivey, another poker pro, but he seemed remarkably cheerful. He said that he had lost fifteen pounds in the past month and was likely to cash in on a twenty-thousand-dollar weight-loss wager that he had made with another friend.

For Lindgren and Negreanu, this was an unusually quiet weekend, the last before the World Series of Poker, an annual event, which runs this year from the beginning of June through the middle of July and culminates in a week-long championship in no-limit Texas hold 'em, currently the most popular version of the game. But the living room seemed different, too. DVDs that had been scattered on the floor in December were now neatly filed in a caddy by the fireplace, and, above the mantelpiece, an oil painting of Kramer, from "Seinfeld," and an oversized presentation check for a million dollars, from PartyPoker.com, were arranged in crisp right angles. Lindgren had hired a housekeeper.

For professional poker players, engaging a housekeeper is not a simple task, largely because of their relationship to cash. They keep a lot of it around, in loose wads; the game both provides and requires it. "It's the silliest thing," Negreanu said, "but I feel naked unless I have some money on me. If I was going to the Rite Aid right here, just to get some shampoo, I would bring six or seven thousand, just in case. Like if, on the way, I had to buy a car." On my first visit, Lindgren's roommate, Ryan Bambrough, had left a tournament buy-in, or entry fee—in this case, three thousand dollars



Texas-hold-'em stars Daniel Negreanu, Jennifer Harman, and Erick Lindgren.

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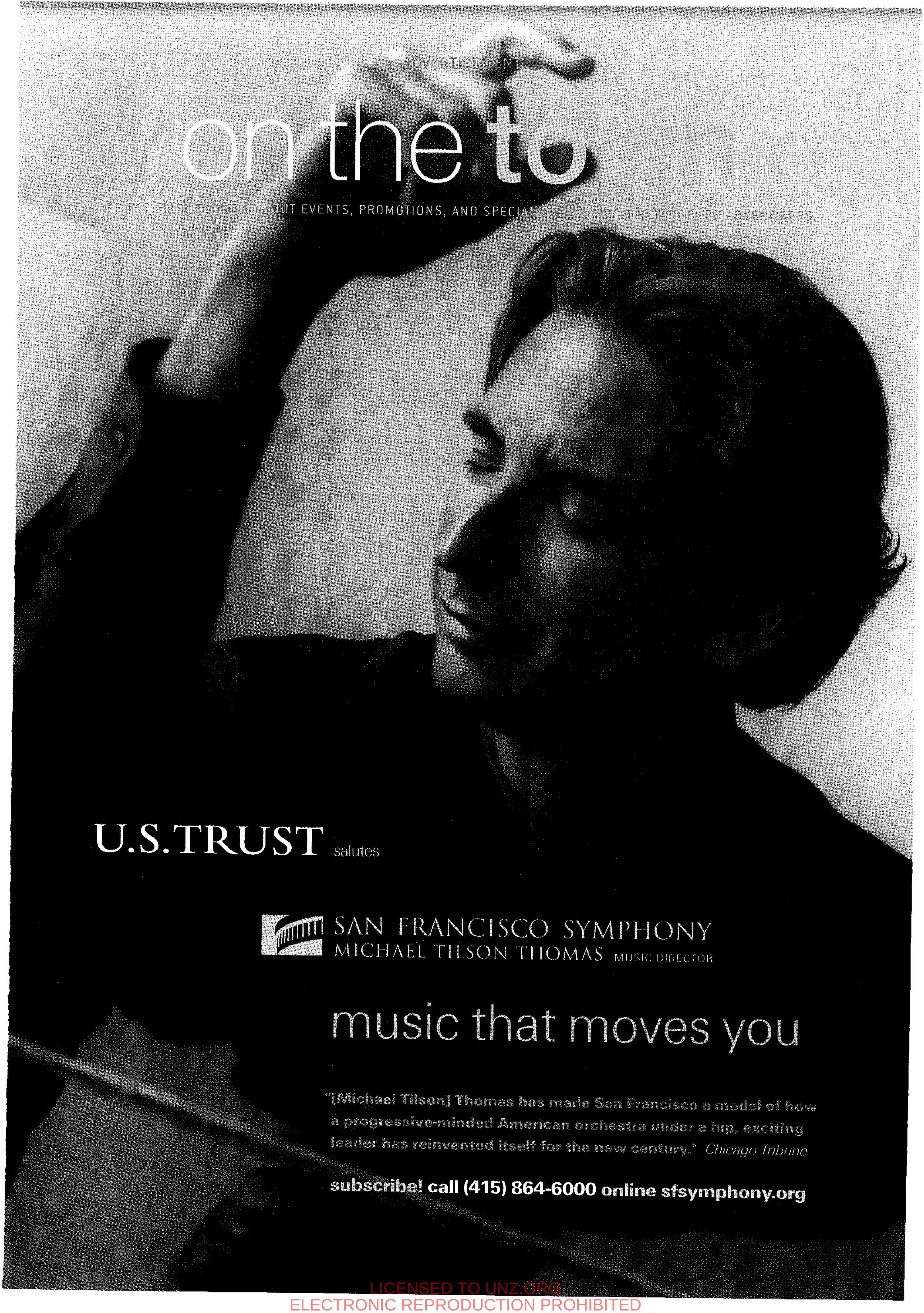

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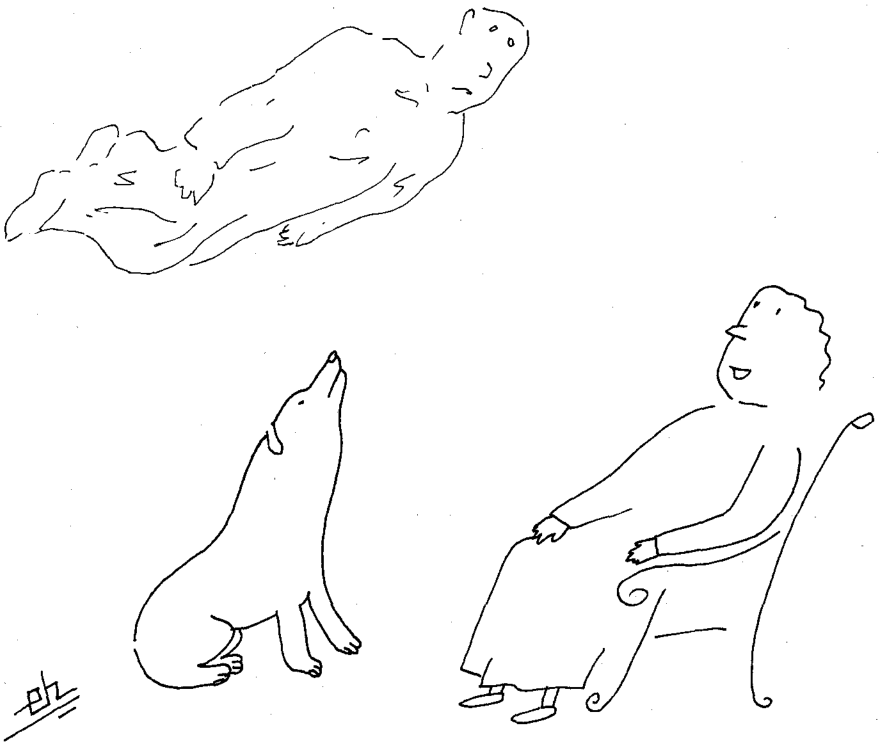


"Well, when you haunt, do you have to float around? Can't you sit down and have some cookies?"

• •

in hundred-dollar bills—on the marble island in the kitchen. The money sat there all afternoon, while Lindgren's guests traipsed in and out, fetching slices of takeout pizza during commercial breaks. To tidy a house that contains so much cash that you have to tidy the cash itself requires a housekeeper who is part saint. Lindgren's friend Jennifer Harman, who may be the best female poker player in the world and lives a few miles away with her husband and four dogs, recommended her housekeeper, Maricarmen Soria. Now Negreanu employs her, too.

Poker is experiencing a cash boom. In the past five years, the first-place prize in the World Series of Poker's championship event has grown from a million dollars, in 2000, to an estimated eight million this year, an increase that can be traced to developments in television and on the Internet that have attracted new players in unprecedented numbers. In 1998, the first online-poker sites made it possible for people to log on from anywhere, at any time. The money flowing into poker sites padded the bankrolls of young players like Lindgren, who won his first online tournament when he was twenty-two and was soon earning seven times what he had been making at his local casino. But the Web sites didn't really take off until professional poker tournaments began appearing regularly on television, early in 2003. Television producers used reality-show-style editing and clever camera angles to make the game look exciting and deceptively easy. Viewers responded by taking out their credit cards, sitting down at their computers, and playing the game online. Poker sites returned the favor by rewarding winners of Internet tournaments with entry fees to televised tournaments, and the accumulation of those fees—which can be as much as fifteen thousand dollars—has resulted in multimillion-dollar purses on the pro tour. In tournament play alone, Negreanu has earned more than six million dollars since 1997. (He estimates that he has won another six million in online games and at casino cash games.) Lindgren, who is currently twenty-third on the Hendon Mob site, has collected more than three million since 1999.

Winnings are no longer the only source of revenue for successful poker pros. Draped over the back of Lindgren's couch were three unworn jerseys, in basketball, baseball, and football versions—the latest merchandise from FullTiltPoker.com, which pays him to wear clothes bearing the company's logo when he plays in tournaments. (He has a similar deal with Knob Creek Bourbon.) Negreanu is in greater demand. His poker-related side ventures include—in addition to his columns, which appear in the magazine *Card Player* and in twelve newspapers—a Web site and blog, fullcontactpoker.com, which receives a hundred thousand visitors a month; a video game called Stacked, which goes on sale this fall; a how-to book, which is to be published next year; an instructional DVD; a poker-chip set; and a bobble-head doll in his likeness. In February, he signed an agreement with FocusonPoker.com to endorse Clear Edge, an adrenaline blocker that is being marketed as a "poker vitamin" and has been popular with NASCAR drivers, because it keeps them relaxed. "I was laughing the first time I heard that," Negreanu said. "Then I took them and I said, 'You know what? They kind of work.' "

"I can count on more than one hand the guys who did speed and went from average players to making million-dollar bankrolls," he added. "But then they became dependent on it, and they wound up going broke and being in debt." (In poker circles, Negreanu is famous for his meat-free and caffeine-free diet, and he swears that he has never taken drugs.)

Between tournaments, Lindgren and Negreanu often play pool together, or visit comedy clubs. When Negreanu, a Toronto native, flew home to throw the first pitch at a Blue Jays game in May, Lindgren went along, and Negreanu complained affectionately in his blog about how loudly his friend had snored in the plane seat next to him. But although the two players are only a couple of years apart, they come from opposite sides of poker's generational divide. Negreanu, a former teen-age bookie, who was thrown out of high school for running a study-hall poker game, was one of the last poker stars to emerge from the world of casino halls and private games. Lindgren, who worked briefly as a casino dealer, owes his career almost entirely to the Internet, and until recently earned most of his money playing online.

Inevitably, the two meet at poker

tables. In February, at a tournament for élite players in Los Angeles, they faced each other at the final table, and Lindgren pulled off what he called a "monster bluff" against Negreanu. The cards almost don't matter: Lindgren started off with a bet of seventy thousand dollars, and Negreanu, sensing a weak hand, raised him two hundred thousand. "I put two hundred and seventy thousand in, so I have two hundred thousand left," Negreanu said. "And Erick looks over my chips and says, 'How much you got left?' And he moves all in"—wagering all he had. Under the special betting rules governing the tournament, Negreanu had only ninety seconds to decide whether to call the bet, and risk losing all his money if Lindgren wasn't bluffing, or to fold, and give up the hefty sum that he had already put into the pot.

"I didn't think he could be so stupid," Negreanu said. "But it wasn't stupid. It was like a step above. He knows that I know that he wouldn't do something so stupid, so by doing something so quote-unquote stupid it actually became a great play."

Negreanu folded, and Lindgren went on to win the tournament and its quarter-million-dollar first-place prize.

Poker favors players with heads for numbers, those who can coolly calculate from the incomplete information before them—the cards in their hand, the cards dealt face up on the table, and the size of an opponent's bet—their likelihood of winning. But in its most sophisticated form, the games in which Lindgren and Negreanu earn their wealth, poker requires a gift for psychological insight and a flair for making unexpected moves. Lindgren and Negreanu are scornful of the players they call the "math guys," who rely on game theory and probability at the expense of intuition. Still, math is at the core of poker's basic strategies, and Negreanu believes that these can be quickly and profitably learned.

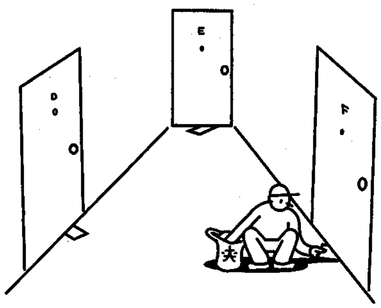
"I went to speak at Ohio State and I ended up jokingly saying that I'm starting my Stay Out of School program," he said. "I was totally kidding, but, realistically, it's not that far-fetched an idea. For kids that are eighteen, nineteen years old, that are going to go to college, get a dead-end job where they make fifty or sixty thousand dollars a year, I can take that same kid, teach him how to play poker, and in three months show him how to make more money than he would ever make in that dead-end job.

"The stock market is gambling, right?" he continued. "This kid studies and he makes money in the stock market, and this is considered by society O.K. A poker player, a kid, sees all these idiots making poor investments on these poker hands and says, 'Wow, I could do a better job than they're doing,' and he studies, and he makes it. How is that different, realistically, than a stockbroker? I mean, I don't see the difference."

"Well," Lindgren said, "there's more cheating and collusion in the stock market."

The latest generation of players is changing the face of poker, literally. You can spot the people who still come to the table with the old poker face—slack, unblinking, inscrutable. Doyle (Texas Dolly) Brunson is one of the best practitioners of this look. He grew up on the prairie fifty miles west of Abilene, and in the nineteen-fifties he drove around the state playing no-limit Texas hold 'em in private games with Thomas (Amarillo Slim) Preston and Brian (Sailor) Roberts. The three often played in professional surroundings with high rollers—oilmen, cattlemen, and financiers—but in some back rooms their opponents proved less than honorable. "I've been hijacked a few times," Brunson wrote in "Super System: A Course in Power Poker," which was first published in 1978, "and I can tell you it's not a pleasant experience to be looking down at the business end of a shotgun."

For most of Brunson's career, poker's reputation could be reduced to its old nineteenth-century nickname: the cheating game. (The word "poker" comes from "*je poque*," meaning "I knock" or "I bet," a phrase used by French-speaking gamblers in New Orleans in the early eighteen-hundreds.) During one rigged contest on a Mississippi steamboat in 1832, James Bowie allegedly pulled his hunting blade—the original bowie knife—on a fellow-player who was holding six cards; he should have had five. Poker flourished in frontier towns, where it incorporated elements of established games, like the British bluffing game brag, and acquired additional rounds of betting, which made it possible for skillful gamblers to wrest larger amounts of money from inexperienced players. But by the end of the nineteen-twenties, poker and its many local variants—stud, spit in the ocean, Kansas City lowball—had been banned, along with other forms of gambling, in most of the West.



Nevada legalized casinos in 1931, and in the early nineteen-sixties several "road gamblers" from Texas introduced no-limit Texas hold 'em to Las Vegas. Hold 'em proved simple to grasp and difficult to master, even for experienced gamblers. Major Riddle, who booked the first topless show in Vegas, lost his controlling interest in the Dunes casino after he lost several million dollars playing hold 'em. In 1970, Binion's Horseshoe Casino hosted the first World Series of Poker, and the original trophy went, by peer vote, to Johnny Moss, a Texas veteran who had seen the need, on one occasion, to point his gun at a peephole in a poker-room ceiling and inquire, "Now, fellas, do I have to go and shoot a bullet in the ceiling? Or you going to send your boy down without any harm?"

Hold 'em did not become a watchable pastime in this country until March, 2003, when Steve Lipscomb, a television producer, created the World Poker Tour, an annual championship series, and began broadcasting it in weekly installments on the Travel Channel. The shows incorporated an obscure English innovation: hidden cameras that allowed the television audience to see each player's two "hole" cards, which, in hold 'em, are combined with the five community cards dealt face up in the middle of the table to make the best possible five-card hand. (Players bet on their likelihood of having the winning hand, first after the hole cards are dealt, then on three more occasions, after the dealer introduces the third, fourth, and fifth community cards.) The hole-card cams, along with on-screen graphics that instantly calculate each hand's odds of winning, cut viewers in on the action: once you know who's bluffing and who's holding the best hand, players' facial expressions become legible and entertainingly full of portent.

Veteran players objected to the hole-card cam, arguing that it divulged signature moves and made it possible for practically anybody to try them, and, in a sense, that's exactly what happened. According to PokerPulse.com, which tracks online play, when the first W.P.T. tournament aired some eighty-eight thousand players were betting almost sixteen million dollars in online poker games every day. Today, those figures have increased more than tenfold: in May, 1.8 million players bet two hundred million dollars online every day. Nearly every televised poker event now includes an unknown online winner playing for the big money at the final table with the pros. These players tend to eschew the flamboyance of the traditional poker costume—cowboy hats and belt buckles, loud Vegas jackets, two-fingered gold rings—in favor of student wear: baseball caps, T-shirts, and wraparound sunglasses. Suburban, clean cut, and frequently college-educated, the Internet winners are helping to turn poker into a respectable, almost wholesome career choice—the latest version, after dot-com startups and day trading, of the American get-rich-quick scheme, a lotto for the thoughtful, and with better odds.

The Bellagio, which added ten tables to its thirty-table poker room and refurbished a separate area for high-stakes cash games in April, has been more responsive than most casinos to the influx of flush, young players. Between Thanksgiving and Christmas, the Bellagio offers a series of qualifiers and specialty tournaments culminating in the Five Diamond World Poker Classic, one of the casino's contributions to the W.P.T. The prize pool for the Five Diamond last December was nearly five and a half million dollars, making it among the largest purses on the poker calendar that year, and three hundred and seventy-six people had paid fifteen thousand dollars each to compete for it.

Most of the players arrived at the casino well before the event, and spent the week leading up to it playing in one tournament or another, sometimes around the clock. To accommodate the play, the casino had set up more than fifty tables on a broad swath of paisley carpet outside the poker room. Poker can be grimly serious—especially hold 'em, which allows players to bet all their chips on the turn of a single card—but it can also be as giddy as a three-Martini lunch, and there was a holiday-party atmosphere in the tournament area. Tobey Maguire was playing in a cash game next to the poker-room office, and Marcel Lüske, a European champion, who was dressed in a handmade suit from Austria, was singing Christmas carols at a table nearby. Negreanu circulated through the poker room, wearing pavé-diamond earrings and a sweater the color of orange Circus Peanuts. He posed for pictures and talked with fans. He autographed whatever he was handed, usually an ace of spades.

Everyday casino poker is rigidly stratified by disposable-income bracket (from the one-to-three-dollar table to the four-thousand-to-eight-thousand-dollar table), but in tournaments everyone starts out even. In the Five Diamond, each player began with a rack of thirty thousand dollars in chips, and the only way to get any more was to win. Tournaments project a rosy, telegenic social ideal, a class-levelling hurly-burly in which luck and guile can win you millions—what players refer to as "life-changing money." Even those who don't walk away rich can enjoy an affirmative-action effect, since low-stakes players, who would not normally have contact with the game's deepest pockets, routinely get into the sort of heavy action in tournaments that convinces them that they can hold their own against wealthier opponents.

Within the first hour of play on the first day of the Five Diamond, Antanas (Tony G.) Guoga, a circuit regular from Lithuania by way of Melbourne, was standing over an older Southeast Asian man with little command of English, and shouting, "That was the worst laydown"—or fold—"of your life. Five nine off-suit! See? And you had queens? You can't play with me! You can't play with me!" As players at other tables stood up to watch, the older man sat motionless, staring at the table, his bald head reddening with embarrassment.

Many of the better players tune out during the early rounds. Lindgren's friend Phil Ivey, a twenty-eight-year-old African-American who may be the most focussed cash-game player in the world, sat hooked up to an iPod. His mouth was half open, and except for his eyes and the blinking red light on his Bose noise-cancelling headphones he was completely still. He looked cold-blooded—not murderous, but indifferent. A scrap of paper next to his iPod turned out to be a check made out in his name, for a hundred thousand dollars.

Because bad players can get lucky, many good ones favor a conservative approach during the early rounds, playing only solid hands and not risking chips on fancy bluffs. Others start their endgame early, knowing that the best way to win is to arrive at the final table with a huge lead in chips. They take risks, trying to build their chip lead against players with no chance of winning—a group referred to as "dead money." Lindgren was eliminated from the tournament this way, and many of the top players followed. "If I'm going to get there, I'm going to have chips," Lindgren said philosophically. "And that separates the really good tournament players from the guys that just make a living." (Using the same approach in three tournaments in January and February, he placed first, second, and fifth.)

When play stopped, at 10:30 P.M., a hundred and forty-three people had been eliminated. Tony G. was in first place, with $224,500 in chips, and Negreanu, who stood a good chance of becoming the magazine *Card Player's* Card Player of the Year if he could finish in the top nine, was second, with $217,175. Trevor Buboltz, who had just turned twenty-one in early November and was probably the youngest entrant in the tournament, was in twenty-seventh place, with $82,425. His parents, who had come from Tinley Park, Illinois, to watch their son play, snapped pictures of him posing with various poker pros. Most players, however, left the casino quickly, to eat and rest before reconvening for another long day.

Negreanu is one of the most fascinating examples of the new poker face. During most games, his face is so confusingly animated—with friendly gibes, eyebrow arching, snatches of song, and sudden mimic impulses—that his rare spells of straight-faced concentration seem like just another ironic stratagem. Like many of the game's younger players, he has started to review tournament footage the way football coaches do game tapes, scanning for behavioral tics, or "tells," that suggest whether an opponent has a strong hand or is bluffing, and then tracking these findings, about which he is very secretive, on Excel spreadsheets. This combination of traits—part geek, part hustler, part bookie—has made Negreanu arguably the most respected tournament player of the past few years, and the first big star to emerge in the era of televised poker.

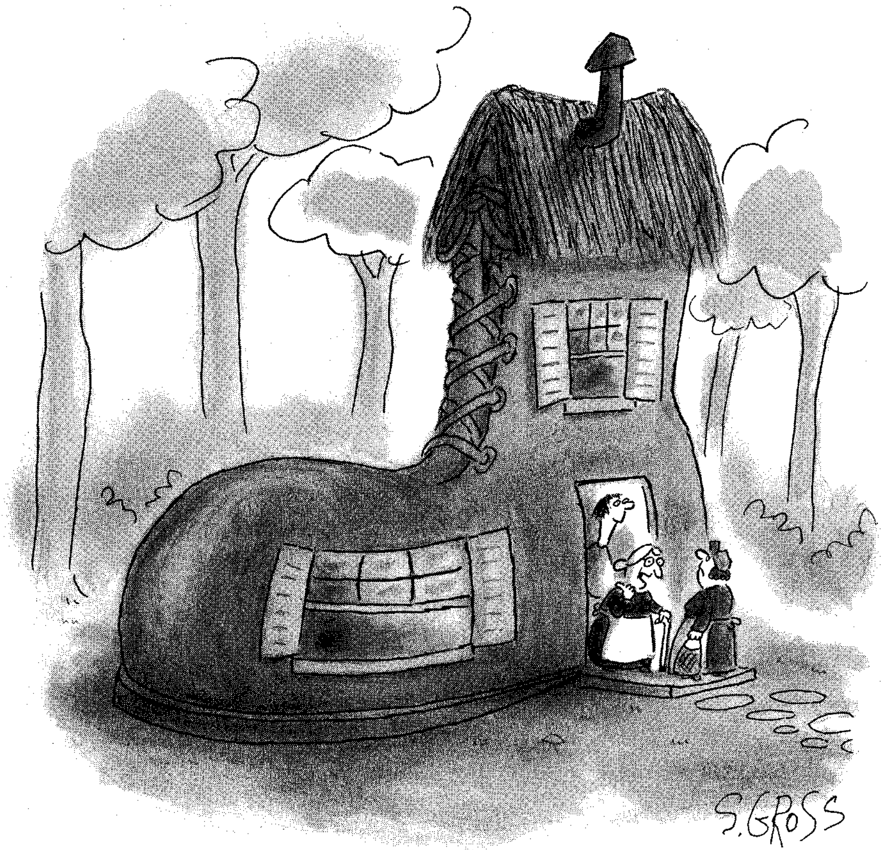
His reputation could hardly be more at odds with his table manner—joking, giving advice, snacking from Tupperware containers of vegetarian food prepared by his mother, who moved to Vegas to be near him. Negreanu weighs about a hundred and forty pounds and has the build—some days, it seems, even the outfits—of an Olympic ice dancer. Nearly every poker player reads his blog, in which he talks with unassuming charm about his game, his mom, his off-again, on-again engagement to a woman he met on a cruise ship, and his interactions with strangers, including a man who drove him to the airport in San Diego after his car broke down (they traded jokes and Negreanu paid the man's rent) and a pair of Italian tourists in Vegas who sold him leather jackets from the trunk of their rental car (he gave them a thousand dollars and took a dozen coats).

Men (the Master) Nguyen, who came to California from Vietnam in 1978, took a seat next to Negreanu early on the third day of play. Pointing at Negreanu, he announced to the table, "I have been up all night reading his articles. I'm here to win tournament!" Negreanu, who was singing along to a Nelly song coming from a nearby club, nodded affably as Nguyen continued to talk. "I read all last night," he said. "I didn't learn a thing. I'd already learned it. Lot of people scared of you. Me, I'm first in line."

The day before, Negreanu had lost his position among the chip leaders, on a hand that he analyzed that night in his blog. Around 6 P.M., he had lost two hundred and twenty-one thousand dollars to Johnny Chan, a two-time winner of the World Series of Poker, which put Chan in second place and left Negreanu with just eighty-one thousand, an amount he nevertheless managed to double, to finish the day in twenty-second place. But within three hours on the third day, Negreanu was securely back in the chips—about half a million dollars' worth, arranged in a flying wedge in front of him—and he kept getting hands so good that they made him laugh. He forced out one player when he filled a straight draw with a king on the last card, and then he hit the rarest and most unbeatable hand in poker, a straight flush, again on the last card dealt. "That was pretty crazy. Never try that one again," he said. He later eliminated David Singer, of White Plains, New York, whom he had been beating soundly, in an all-in confrontation that began with Negreanu lightheartedly saying, "Rematch! Let's see if I get the same deal." Afterward, as he raked in the pot with his long, darting fingers, Negreanu looked up at Singer and said, "Sorry about that," with what sounded like genuine regret.

Whenever he folded a hand, Negreanu took a brief walk around the room, to goad or to socialize, keeping close tabs on the progress of his friend Jennifer Harman. As the field of players thinned, the two were playing at opposite extremes of fortune: Negreanu, with his huge chip lead, was bullying his table—one player called it "money whipping"—scaring people into folding their hands with large, seemingly arbitrary bets and doing so with such regularity that the announcer, Jack McClelland, who had begun to narrate over a microphone for the benefit of the crowd that had gathered near the velvet ropes, said, "Daniel raises the pot. Daniel takes the pot. This is a recording." A couple of hours before play stopped for the evening, Lindgren appeared, to cheer Negreanu on. ("Late night," he explained sheepishly. "I earned a hundred thousand dollars online last night.")

Harman, on the other hand, was barely hanging on. As her holdings dwindled, she had been obliged to commit all of her chips on carefully chosen hands, risking everything she had, in the hope of "doubling up"—that is, winning a pot that contained all her chips and a matching amount from her opponent. At the end of the day, she told a friend who dropped by her table how crazy the



"This is my youngest. When he goes, I'm turning this place into a leather bar."

pressure was making her: "I want to go home. I'm sleepy. I'm full of adrenaline. I want to stay here. I want to knock people out."

Harman, who is in her mid-thirties, is known as a cautious player, who rarely gets into hands that she's not favored to win. She has an intimidating ability to read people: she sits on two stacked chairs to be at eye level with her opponents, and peers at them through highlighted bangs, twitching her nose. Most of the time, she can tell by looking whether someone is bluffing. "I don't know if life helped me with that," she says, "or if poker helped me with life." She started playing for fun at the age of sixteen, in Reno, her home town, where she would sneak into a casino and get instruction from a group of regulars, who took her under their wing. When she moved to Los Angeles, in 1988, she began rapidly improving, spending a few weeks at the five-and-ten-dollar table, a month at the ten-twenty, three months at the fifteen-thirty. She liked the life style so much—getting up when she felt like it, going to the beach, playing a little poker, hanging out with friends—that it didn't dawn on her for quite a while that she was a professional.

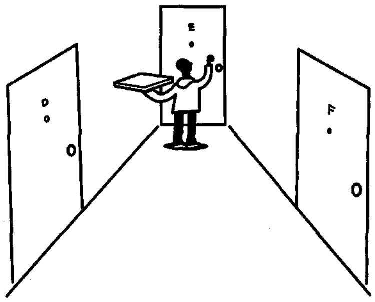
She nearly died last year, when a kidney that she had received in a transplant as a teen-ager suddenly gave out, and she began to waste away. The day after she got a new kidney, in May, Harman, who is five feet two inches tall, weighed eighty-five pounds. That experience may partly explain her discipline at the poker table in long-odds situations, which tend to inspire bets that are foolishly risky. "I'm just hanging on like a money tick!" she said after surviving one all-in encounter. She raised her hand to show how it was shaking. After another all-in—this one against Richard Brodie, the author of Microsoft Word—Harman, wearing a sweater with fuzzy pink letters that spelled "love," "true," and "forever," slid to the floor in mock collapse. "Shew!" she said, and then added, sweetly, "That's always a good sign when Richie doubles me up. That means I might go far."

Harman was still in the game on the fourth day of play, when enough players had been eliminated that the remaining field of ten could sit down at a single poker table. Steven Rassi, a coin-shop owner from Morton, Illinois, kept talking about all the "famous people" around him, and the announcer said, "So give them your chips, Steve. Maybe they'll all sign your hat." When Negreanu eliminated Eric Weiner, of Miami, thereby clinching the title Card Player of the Year, players and bystanders began shaking his hand and offering their congratulations. Johnny Chan, who was wearing a red Versace shirt and a fanny pack, said facetiously, "Why am I playing against the Card Player of the Year? I don't belong here!" A few minutes later, Negreanu eliminated him, too. Lyle Berman, the C.E.O. of Lakes Entertainment, which provided the startup money for the World Poker Tour, stopped by to see which six players were likely to make it to the televised final table. Eying Negreanu's stack of chips—about six million—Berman said, "I think Daniel might become a bully."

"Don't give him any ideas," Harman said.

For the Five Diamond final, the table was set up in a Bellagio conference room, on a travelling studio set, between glowing pillars fitted with colored lights. Spotlights raked the players and the studio audience, in knowing homage to "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire," and, in the wings, Shana Hiatt, a former *Playboy* playmate, who is now the host for the W.P.T., recorded intro segments over and over ("Wanna play in the World Poker Tour? Just come on down").

Then the players and their chip counts were announced. Unlike casino chips, tournament chips have no real cash value: they're a financial fiction and a dramatic convenience. Usually, though, the chip stacks have a rough relation to the actual prize at stake. But, at $6.865 million, Negreanu's lead was so great—Vinny Landrum, in second place, had just $1.14 million—that the fiction had become a farce. "Let's see," he would say when it was his turn to bet, looking up to the ceiling and pensively thumbing his chin. "How much shall I bet? Anyone got a suggestion? How about 4.2 million?" To amuse himself and the crowd, Negreanu played a few hands without looking at his cards. At one point, he pushed all-in, causing the other players at the table to fold, and a friend of his in the audience yelled out, "O.K., cut it out, now."



"What?" he called back. "It's fun!"

It didn't take long. First Nam Le, an accomplished newcomer from Huntington Beach, California, went down, followed by Rassi, the coin-shop owner, and Harman, who took $299,492 for fourth place. (The casino offered cash or chips; she chose chips.) After Landrum was eliminated, leaving Negreanu and Humberto Brenes, a veteran player from Costa Rica, three women, dressed in black gowns and stiletto heels, brought out the winner's share: $1,770,218 in cash, piled on silver platters. During the celebration afterward, Brenes, the runner-up, hugged Negreanu's mother, a round woman dressed in vintage jewelry and a red leopard-print shirt. "Mama, you have a good son," he said.

Negreanu's command over money in the game is accompanied by a strange indifference to it in everyday life. The huge prize, he said, didn't change a thing for him. "You know what I bought with my winnings?" he said. "Three Xbox games and four CDs. Went out for, like, five hundred bucks."

A few days after his victory, he philosophized in his blog about depression, in a polite Canadian way, remarking on how closely the lows follow the highs, and then he was back on the poker circuit, stopping in Toronto, where his reception surprised him. The night before a charity hockey game, at which he was scheduled to act as the celebrity coach, Negreanu followed three players—Eric Brewer, of the Edmonton Oilers; Mike Comrie, of the Phoenix Coyotes; and Steve Montador, of the Calgary Flames—out the door of the Sheraton hotel and was the one mobbed by the fans. "It was pretty surreal, knowing it's a hockey town, and I'm with some of the most famous hockey players in the world, and they schlep to the limos and nobody recognizes them, and I'm bombarded. And I'm, like, 'Wow, poker has arrived.' " ♦

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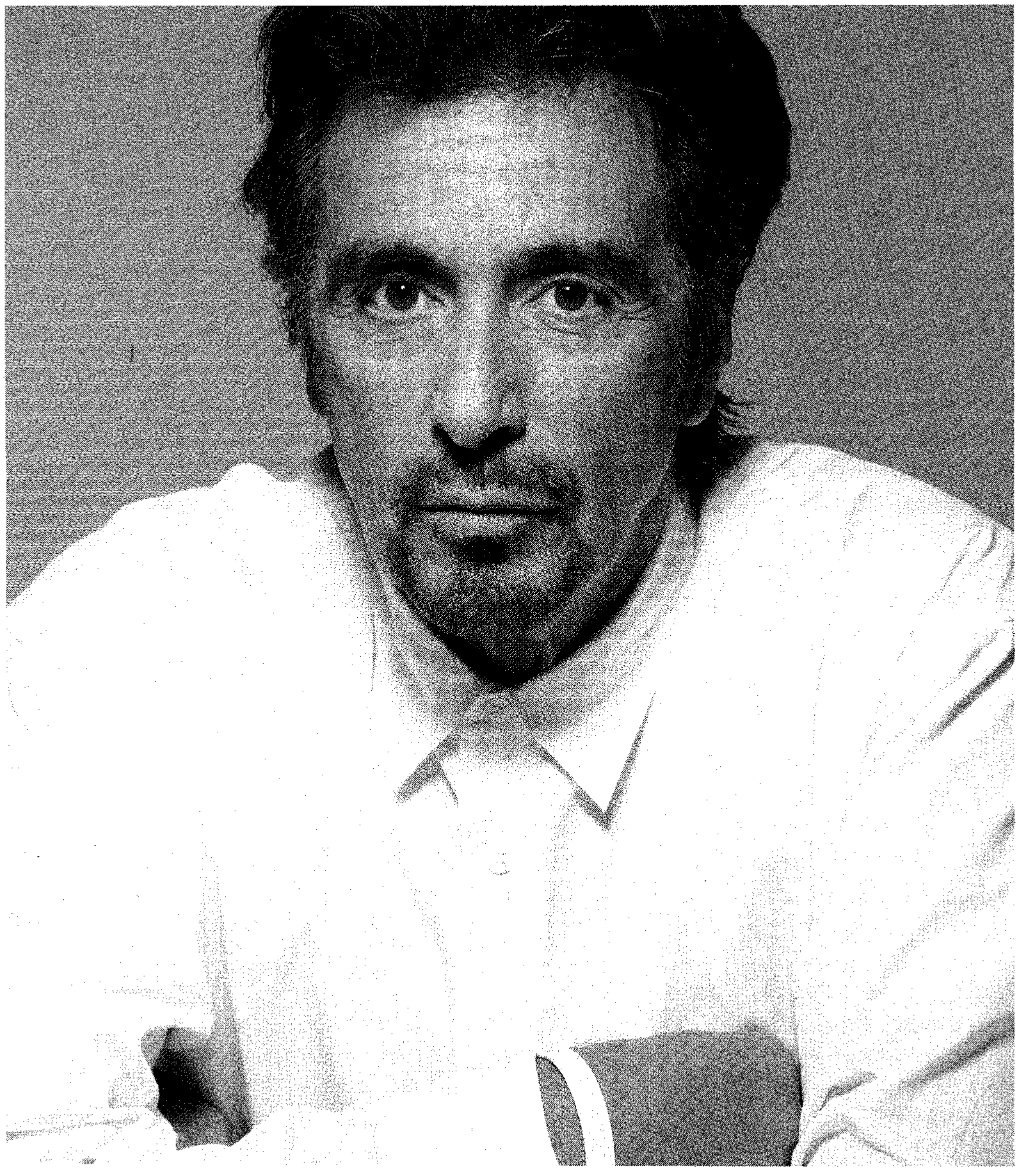

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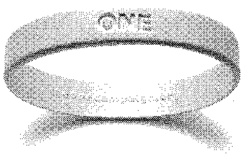

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A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE EXPERIMENT

The military trains people to withstand interrogation. Are those methods being misused at Guantánamo?

BY JANE MAYER

On a steamy morning last month, as Congress was debating the treatment of the approximately five hundred terrorist suspects being held inside the United States-run military detention center in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, a small delegation of American officials led a tour through one of the prison camp's empty cellblocks. The International Committee of the Red Cross has made inspections of the site, the results of which it keeps confidential, and a few dozen American lawyers have had limited visits with detainees. Yet most of the prisoners, who come from some forty countries, have been held virtually incommunicado, without legal charges, for three and a half years.

The cellblock, which had been fashioned from steel shipping crates, resembled a horse barn. Six-foot-by-eight-foot cells, with walls and doors of metal mesh, stood in two facing rows. The cells were protected by a low metal roof but were open to the tropical air. Each door featured a narrow slot, at waist height, through which meals and other items could be handed to detainees, and handcuffs and belly chains could be secured. The first cell on the right was laid out like a display model, with neatly folded prison garb and an array of what the officials called "comfort items"—awarded to detainees for good behavior, or confiscated as punishment. Among these luxuries was a roll of toilet paper. The cell was furnished with a thin plastic-covered mattress on a metal slab; a metal sink; a metal toilet; and a surgical mask, which could be hung from the wall, allowing a detainee to store a small Koran inside it.

"I'd be proud to let the media see anything in this camp," Colonel Mike Bumgarner, the commander of the Joint Detention Operations Group, the military unit that oversees the daily handling of detainees, said. "I'd gladly invite the world in to see our guards in action. I'm very proud of what they do. They treat the detainees humanely." Meals, he said, were excellent. "They get honey-glazed chicken and rice pilaf. They get lemon-baked fish." He noted that some detainees don't like to have their vegetables touching their meat: "So we serve them separately, in little Styrofoam clamshells, like the ones you get at a fast-food restaurant." He went on, "We have to be like the parents here. In loco parentis. That's how we look at it. It's like a big family."

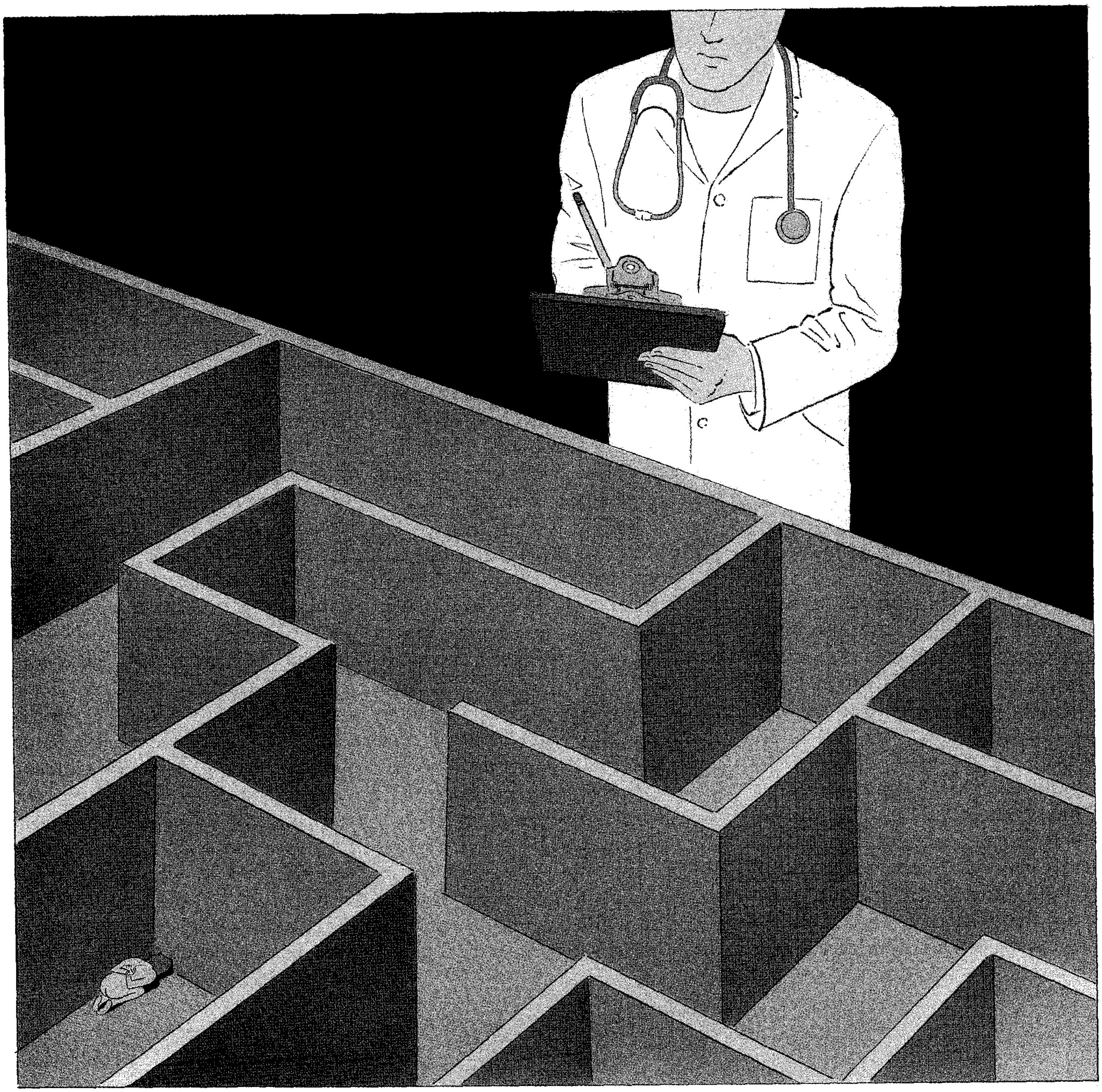
As we reached the end of the cellblock, hysterical shouts, in broken English, erupted from a caged exercise area nearby. "Come here!" a man screamed. "See here! They are liars!" He was middle-aged, with a full beard and skinny bow legs, and wore an orange shirt and shorts. ("Privileged"—that is, coöperative—detainees wear white or beige uniforms.) "No sleep!" he yelled. "No food! No medicine! No doctor! Everybody sick here!" A soldier near the detainee began ferociously signalling to the officials leading the tour to usher me out. As I was leaving, the detainee pointed to his own cellblock, which was off limits to journalists, and screamed, "They are liars! Liars! Liars!"

"His English is pretty good," one official joked wanly.

The military officials who run the Guantánamo prison maintain that almost all of the detainees' charges are untrue. A training manual written by Al Qaeda leaders, which is known as the Manchester Manual, because a copy of it was confiscated during a 2000 raid in England, counsels Islamists to "complain of mistreatment while in prison" and say that "torture was inflicted on them." Bumgarner said, "They are trained to make false accusations. It's part of their P.R."

Brigadier General Jay W. Hood, the top commander of the camp, has worked to improve administrative control since taking over, in March, 2004. He has implemented random inspections of the cellblocks, to insure that "standard operating procedures" are being followed, and he has banished regular "cavity searches" for detainees. Lawyers and human-rights workers say that detainees are being treated less harshly, although their mental state continues to deteriorate. In an interview, Hood said that there have been "no demonstrated or consistent trends of abuse" inside Guantánamo, and "certainly nothing rising to the level of torture." From the beginning, however, the Guantánamo Bay prison camp was conceived by the Bush Administration as a place that could operate outside the system of national and international laws that normally govern the treatment of prisoners in U.S. custody. Soon after September 11th, the Administration argued that the Guantánamo site, which America had been leasing from the Cuban government since 1903, was not bound by the Geneva Conventions. Moreover, the Administration claimed that terrorist suspects detained at the site were not ordinary criminals or prisoners of war; rather, they would be classified under a new rubric, "unlawful combatants." This new class of suspects would be tried not in U.S. courts but in military tribunals, the Administration announced. In February, 2002, President Bush issued a broad directive that required American troops to treat detainees "humanely," in a manner consistent with the Geneva Conventions, within the limits of "military necessity." A year later, he explicitly denounced the use of torture.

A series of internal Department of Defense investigations found what General Hood described as "isolated cases where individuals hadn't followed standard operating procedures." Many of the incidents addressed by the Pentagon had been widely reported in the media, making the camp a focus of international outrage. In one case, a female interrogator, attempting to unsettle a Muslim detainee, smeared fake menstrual blood on him. And on five separate occasions Korans were defiled; one soldier urinated



Critics say that medical and scientific personnel have played a role, largely hidden, in helping to design and monitor interrogations.

GUY BILLOUT

through a ventilation shaft, splashing the text—accidentally, according to the Pentagon. (This spring, *Newsweek* reported that military investigators had evidence that guards at Guantánamo had flushed a Koran down a toilet. The Bush Administration adamantly denied the charge, and, ultimately, the magazine admitted that it did not have sufficient sourcing to stand by the story.) In each acknowledged case of impropriety at Guantánamo, Hood stressed, the transgressors had been reprimanded, but he doubted that their actions could be said to "rise to the level of abuse."

Last year, Vice-Admiral Albert T. Church III was appointed by the Pentagon to investigate the problem of detainee abuse. This spring, he released a three-hundred-and-sixty-eight-page report, most of which remains classified. In an unclassified section, Church concluded that there was "no link between approved interrogation techniques and detainee abuse." When cruelties did occur, the report claimed, they were rare mishaps, the result of combat stress, insufficient oversight, or a "breakdown of good order and discipline."

Yet a number of critics, including human-rights officials, detainees' lawyers, and others with knowledge of the inner workings of the detention center, believe that the problems at Guantánamo are the result of a more systematic effort. The strange accounts of torment that have steadily emerged, these critics say, are connected to decades of research by American scientists into the psychological nature of warfare and captivity. The research, which began during the Cold War, developed new currency after September 11th, when the Bush Administration declared a global war on terror and began trying to extract intelligence from radical Islamists, many of whom have been trained not to reveal anything about their activities. Since

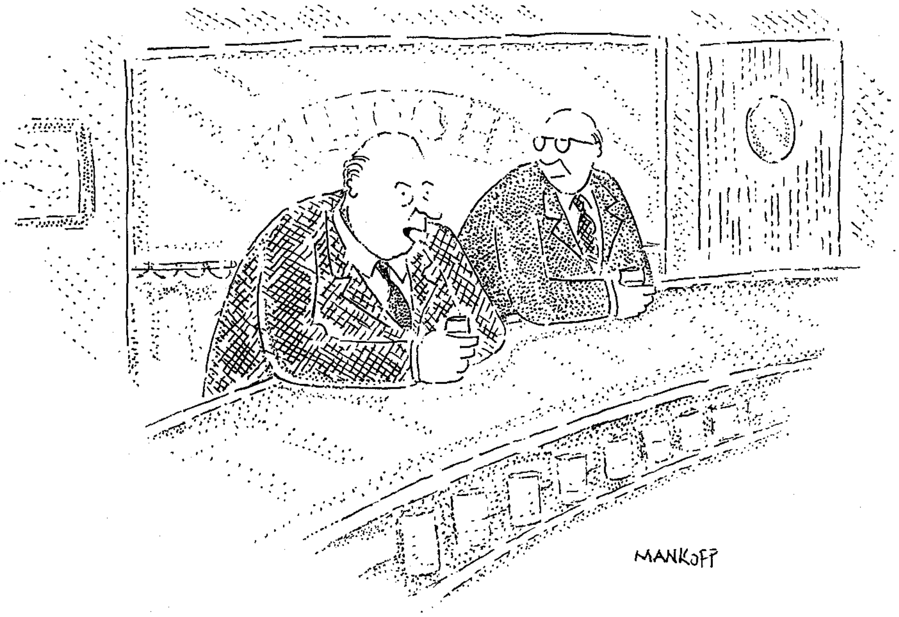
2001, the critics say, medical and scientific personnel have played a role, largely hidden, in helping to design and monitor interrogations that are intended to exploit the physical and mental vulnerabilities of detainees. According to a former interrogator at Guantánamo who was interviewed at length by a lawyer, behavioral scientists control the most minute details of interrogations, to the point of decreeing, in the case of one detainee, that he would be given seven squares of toilet paper per day.

"It is both illegal and deeply unethical to use techniques that profoundly disrupt someone's personality," Leonard S. Rubenstein, the executive director of Physicians for Human Rights, an advocacy group that has been critical of the Bush Administration, says. "But that's precisely what interrogators are doing, in order to try to get people to talk."

Baher Azmy, a professor at Seton Hall Law School, in Newark, New Jersey, represents a Guantánamo detainee named Murat Kurnaz, a twenty-three-year-old Turkish citizen who was born in Germany. Kurnaz, who was apprehended while on a trip to Pakistan, has been detained in Guantánamo since 2002. Azmy told me that Kurnaz has complained of being sexually taunted by female interrogators who, he said, offered to have sex with him in exchange for giving information. When one woman began embracing him from behind, Kurnaz said, he turned and head-butted her. According to Kurnaz, he was then beaten by members of the Initial Reaction Forces, a military-police squad that patrols the cellblocks. Kurnaz claimed that he was made to lie on the floor, with his hands cuffed behind his back, for nearly a day. He also told Azmy that he was threatened with starvation and forcibly injected with unknown and debilitating drugs. (All of Kurnaz's charges have been denied by U.S. authorities.) Azmy told me, "These psychological gambits are obviously not isolated events. They're prevalent and systematic. They're tried, measured, and charted. These are ways to humiliate and disorient the detainees. The whole place appears to be one giant human experiment."

Concrete evidence of the medical and psychological mistreatment of detainees is all but impossible to obtain, in part because the Justice Department, in contravention of all national and international norms, has repeatedly blocked attempts by lawyers to get copies of detainees' medical records. "Prisoners, even terrorists, have the right to their medical records, according to federal laws, common laws, the American Medical Association, and court trials," Arthur Caplan, a bioethicist at the University of Pennsylvania, says. In an interview at Guantánamo Bay, Dr. John S. Edmondson, a Navy captain who oversees the facility's medical command, denied that he had refused to turn over medical records. "I believe we've complied with the requests that have reached me," he said. A respect for confidentiality, he said, prevented him from specifying the names of detainees whose medical records he had released. Yet Rob Kirsch, a partner at the law firm Wilmer Hale, who represents six Guantánamo detainees, provided me with a file of letters from the Justice Department denying him access to his clients' medical records, even though he had obtained waivers from the clients authorizing their records to be released to him. "They still wouldn't let us see the records," he said. Kirsch contends that at Guantánamo medical care is sometimes withheld or dispensed depending on a detainee's willingness to talk to interrogators. All his clients, he said, have made this complaint, despite having had no opportunity to talk to one another. One of his clients, Mustafa Ait Idir, was deemed resistant by guards, and they allegedly broke two of his fingers; Idir was not allowed to see a doctor after the incident, Kirsch said, and his hand is now severely misshapen. (Kirsch visited Idir at Guantánamo several times after the hand was damaged.) All six of Kirsch's clients have requested dental care to no avail. One client's teeth were so damaged that he was unable to eat regular food; after dental treatment was withheld, the prisoner requested a soft-food diet, which tasted so bad that he lost forty pounds. Edmondson denied that care had been deliberately withheld from any detainee. He also denied that medical professionals under his command had colluded with interrogators.

Scott Sullivan, a lawyer at Allen & Overy, a firm that represents eleven detainees from Yemen, alleged that medics under Edmondson's command routinely violated codes of medical ethics. For example, medics supervised the beating of one of his clients, Saeed Abdullah Sarim, he said. After Sarim was hit repeatedly in the face, an English-speaking detainee nearby allegedly told him that a medic had tried to calibrate the abuse, saying, "Hit him *around* the eye, not *in* the eye." After the beating, according to a report compiled by Sullivan's firm, Sarim asked a nurse for stitches. The nurse, Sarim said in the report, "did not answer me and did not treat the wound."



"And another thing. When they start telling you 'You've still got it,' you don't."

Another client of Sullivan's, Abdul Aziz al-Swidi, claimed to have been interrogated by a psychiatrist, who allegedly showed him a picture of a telephone and asked him what it was. When Swidi answered that it was a telephone, the psychiatrist angrily responded, "It's not a telephone—it's a bomb!" Swidi was shown other images and asked to identify them, and each time he was told that his answer was wrong. The goal of the exercise, Sullivan believes, was to make Swidi think that he was going crazy. ("We have no records or reports of this allegation," a Guantánamo spokesman said.)

Last month, a report in the *Times* said that doctors at Guantánamo had provided interrogators with information from some detainees' medical records. In one case, interrogators were told that a detainee had a profound fear of the dark, and ways were suggested to exploit this phobia, in order to break down the detainee's resistance to questioning. Also last month, an article in *The New England Journal of Medicine* revealed that a military policy statement instructed caregivers at Guantánamo to offer clinical information to interrogation teams on request. And last year a confidential report by the International Committee of the Red Cross, parts of which were leaked to the Washington *Post*, charged that doctors consulted detainee medical records to help interrogators, in a "flagrant violation of medical ethics." Edmondson said that the Red Cross's charges were wrong, but he added that national-security concerns might sometimes justify the breaching of a detainee's medical confidentiality.

The role of physicians, who take the Hippocratic oath to "do no harm," is ethically complicated in wartime. Doctors are often described as having "dual loyalties," to patients and to country. But at the Nuremberg trials, after the Second World War, revulsion at Nazi atrocities led to the establishment of rules barring medical mistreatment, even for reasons of national security. A section of the 1950 Geneva Convention, for example, states that "no prisoner of war may be subjected to physical mutilation or to medical or scientific experiments of any kind which are not justified by the medical, dental or hospital treatment of the prisoner concerned." In 1962, the U.S. passed the first law requiring doctors to obtain "informed consent" from patients. And in 1975 the World Medical Association, or W.M.A., issued the Declaration of Tokyo, which barred medical personnel from participation in either torture or abuse, even as monitors. The American Medical Association is a member of the W.M.A., which means that U.S. doctors must follow its ethical standards.

In June, the Pentagon released a new set of formal ethical guidelines, titled "Medical Program Principles and Procedures for the Protection and Treatment of Detainees in the Custody of the Armed Forces of the United States." The document, which was issued by Dr. William Winkenwerder, Jr., the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, stresses the importance of upholding "the humane treatment of detainees." It states that "health-care personnel charged with the medical care of detainees" cannot participate in interrogations. In this phrase is embedded a troubling loophole, however: scientific and medical personnel who are not directly responsible for a patient's care may take part in interrogations. Leonard Rubenstein, of Physicians for Human Rights, argues that "the Administration has basically given a green light for medical personnel to participate in abuse."

Winkenwerder, who formerly worked in the insurance industry, argues that most of the detainees have never received better care than they have been getting at Guantánamo. The Pentagon, he told me, took extraordinary pains to insure that detainees were treated in compliance with medical ethics and American values, and he presented statistics showing that last year Guantánamo detainees got more frequent medical treatment than most Americans. A state-of-the-art field hospital had been set up on the periphery of the prison camp, he said, and trained Navy medical corpsmen checked on the detainees' health and welfare three times a week. "A lot of good people are being besmirched by these stories," he said, referring to media reports that have described abuses of detainees at Guantánamo.

Winkenwerder did acknowledge, however, that a number of medical and scientific personnel working at Guantánamo—including psychologists and psychiatrists—are not providing care for detainees. Rather, these "non-treating" professionals have been using their skills to "assist the interrogators," as he put it.

People working in this advisory capacity are members of what are called Behavioral Science Consultation Teams, or BSCTs. (In military jargon, the teams are known as "Biscuits.") In past wars, the U.S. military has used health-care consultants for therapeutic purposes, to evaluate the combat readiness of soldiers with psychological or physiological problems, and to provide soldiers with counselling and psychotropic drugs. But Major General Geoffrey D. Miller—who commanded the Guantánamo Bay detention center between November, 2002, and March, 2004, and who was then sent by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to manage Abu Ghraib prison, in Iraq—established a new role for health-care advisers. "These teams, comprised of operational behavioral psychologists and psychiatrists, are essential in developing integrated interrogation strategies and assessing interrogation intelligence production," Miller explained in an internal report in September, 2003.

Winkenwerder told me that BSCT members are not under his command; rather, they fall under military intelligence. He said that he knew little about the program's daily operations but had heard that a number of BSCT psychologists and psychiatrists had received specialized training. "It's connected to some military acronym," he said. "Something to do with Survival and Evasion."

Winkenwerder was referring to a Pentagon-funded program known as SERE, which stands for "Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape." SERE was created by the Air Force, at the end of the Korean War, to teach pilots and other personnel considered at high risk of being captured by enemy forces how to withstand and resist extreme forms of abuse. After the Vietnam War, the program was expanded to the Army and the Navy. Most details of the program's curriculum are classified.

Each branch of the military now has its own version of SERE training. The flagship program is conducted by the Army's John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where Green Berets train. There are several levels of SERE courses; one, Level C, includes a gruelling exercise in which trainees endure days of physical and psychological hardship inside a mock prisoner-of-war camp.

This spring, I spoke at length with several people familiar with the SERE programs, including a longtime affiliate. According to these sources, a small number of psychologists and other clinicians oversee the SERE program at Fort Bragg. The supervisors discreetly check on trainees' progress at frequent intervals, keeping extensive charts and records of their behavior and medical status. Numerous experiments aimed at documenting trainees' stress levels have been conducted by SERE-affiliated scientists. By analyzing blood and saliva, they have charted fluctuations in trainees' level of cortisol, a stress hormone, and these data have been used to understand what inspires maximum anxiety in the trainees.

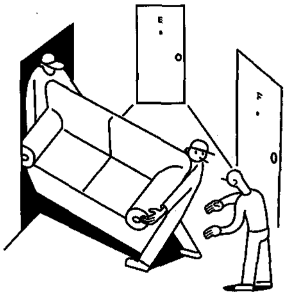
The theory behind the SERE program is that soldiers who are exposed to nightmarish treatment during training will be better equipped to deal with such terrors should they face them in the real world. Accordingly, the program is a storehouse of knowledge about coercive methods of interrogation. One way to stimulate acute anxiety, SERE scientists have learned, is to create an environment of radical uncertainty: trainees are hooded; their sleep patterns are disrupted; they are starved for extended periods; they are stripped of their clothes; they are exposed to extreme temperatures; and they are subjected to harsh interrogations by officials impersonating enemy captors. (Colonel Hans Bush, a spokesman at Fort Bragg, declined to "disclose the details of the specific challenges our students face.") Research in social psychology has shown that a person's capacity for "self-regulation"—the ability to moderate or control his own behavior—can be substantially undermined in situations of high anxiety. If, for instance, a prisoner of war is trying to avoid revealing secrets to enemy interrogators, he is much less likely to succeed if he has been deprived of sleep or is struggling to ignore intense pain.

According to the SERE affiliate and two other sources familiar with the program, after September 11th several psychologists versed in SERE techniques began advising interrogators at Guantánamo Bay and elsewhere. Some of these psychologists essentially "tried to reverse-engineer" the SERE program, as the affiliate put it. "They took good knowledge and used it in a bad way," another of the sources said. Interrogators and BSCT members at Guantánamo adopted coercive techniques similar to those employed in the SERE program. Ideas intended to help Americans resist abuse spread to Americans who used them to perpetrate abuse. Jonathan Moreno, a bioethicist at the University of Virginia, is a scholar of state-sponsored experiments on humans. He says, "If you know how to help people who are stressed, then you also know how to stress people, in order to get them to talk."

Carol Darby, a spokeswoman at Fort Bragg, said that the SERE program has not deviated from its original purpose. In an e-mail, she wrote, "SERE training is not designed and it does not teach anyone how to interrogate individuals. Students who go through SERE are taught methods to resist interrogation techniques that may be used against them; they are taught how to respond when they are on the receiving end of interrogation."

Yet many of the interrogation methods used in SERE training seem to have been applied at Guantánamo. One component of the training program, called the "religious dilemma," parallels Guantánamo detainees' chronic complaints about Koran abuse. At SERE, trainees in the Level C course are given the choice of seeing a Bible desecrated or revealing secrets to interrogators. "They are challenging your faith," the SERE affiliate explained. "The Holy Book is torn up. They say they'll stop if you talk. Sometimes they rip the Bible and throw it in the air." The goal is to make detainees react emotionally to the desecration. Some trainees who are devout Christians become profoundly disturbed during the exercise.

In May, an e-mail written by a graduate of the SERE program was posted on Informed Comment, the blog of Juan Cole, a history professor at the University of Michigan, who is critical of the Bush Administration. The e-mail, which was anonymous, asserted, "Gitmo must be being used as a 'laboratory' for all these psychological manipulation techniques." Cole provided me with contact information for the SERE graduate, and I spoke on the phone with him. He confirmed his identity, but said that he wished to remain anonymous, fearing that his comments about the program might have legal repercussions.



The SERE graduate explained that he had attended Army Ranger school, and had served on active duty in the Marines for eleven years, part of the time as an intelligence officer. In 1999, he attended the Navy's SERE training program in Coronado, California. He told me that the program had been "very professionally run." But, he said, when he read about the treatment of detainees at Guantánamo he was reminded of his experiences during SERE training simulations.

On the blog, the graduate offered a detailed account of a SERE training exercise. (He confirmed the account's details with me.) He wrote, "One of the most memorable parts of the camp experience was when one of the camp leaders trashed a Bible on the ground, kicking it around, etc. It was a crushing blow, even though this was just a school."

The graduate wrote that his experience with the "Bible trashing" took place "towards the end of the camp experience, which was 2-3 days of captivity." He continued:

> We were penned in concrete cell blocks about 4' x 4' x 4'—told to kneel, but allowed to squat or sit. There was no door, just a flap that could be let down if it was too cold outside (which it was). Each trainee was interrogated to some extent, all experienced some physical interrogation such as pushing, shoving, getting slammed against a wall (usually a large metal sheet set up so that it would not seriously injure trainees), with some actually water-boarded (not me).
>
> The Bible trashing was done by one of the top-ranked leaders of the camp, who was always giving us speeches—sort of "making it real" so to speak, because it is a pretty contrived environment. But by the end it almost seemed real. Guards spoke English with a Russian accent, wore Russian-looking uniforms. So the Bible trashing happened when this guy had us all in the courtyard sitting for one of his speeches. They were tempting us with a big pot of soup that was boiling—we were all starving from a few days of chow deprivation. He brought out the Bible and

> started going off on it verbally—how it was worthless, we were forsaken by this God, etc. Then he threw it on the ground and kicked it around. It was definitely the climax of his speech. Then he kicked over the soup pot, and threw us back in the cells. Big climax. And psychologically it was crushing and heartbreaking, and then we were left isolated to contemplate this.

"I bumped into a new girlfriend last night."

The SERE graduate, who is religious, said that the repeated mistreatment of the Koran at Guantánamo was "sickening" and "immoral." Referring to the interrogators there, he said, "They have turned the whole world against us."

The graduate's claim that waterboarding took place at the Navy's SERE school was confirmed by the SERE affiliate. Waterboarding is intended to simulate drowning and asphyxiation. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, a top Al Qaeda operative who was apprehended in Pakistan in 2003, has reportedly been subjected to it. (It is unknown if the technique yielded useful intelligence.) In the version used in the Navy's SERE training program, the affiliate said, the student is bound to an inclined board, his feet higher than his head. A stream of water is then slowly poured up his nose. In SERE training, the technique is highly controlled to prevent serious physical harm (although the trainees don't sense this). There is a strict limit of only a few cups of water per student. As an extra precaution, the trainees do jumping jacks first, to elevate their heart rate, which enables them to hold their breath for long periods during the ordeal.

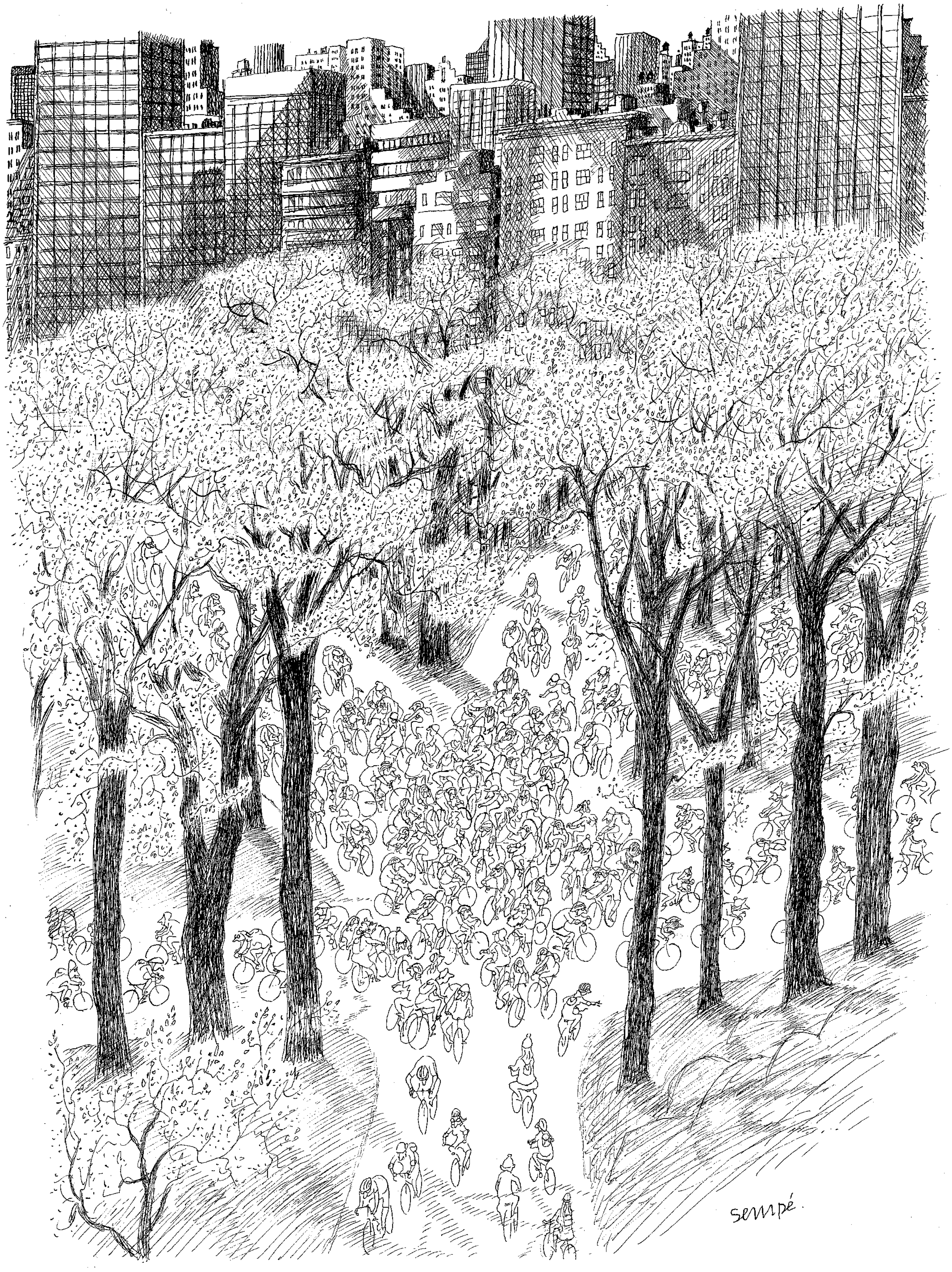
Another SERE technique that has apparently surfaced at Guantánamo is the use of "noise stress." The SERE affiliate told me that trainees often think that the interrogation portion of the program will be the most gruelling, but in fact for many trainees the worst moment is when they are made to listen to taped loops of cacophonous sounds. One of the most stress-inducing tapes is a recording of babies crying inconsolably. Another is a Yoko Ono album. Detainees at Guantánamo have reportedly been subjected to blaring audiotapes of loud music, cats meowing, and human infants wailing.

Critics also allege that the SERE program has become a testing ground for interrogation techniques involving sexual embarrassment and humiliation. (Detainees at Guantánamo have complained of such methods, and the scandal at Abu Ghraib last year revealed that guards there photographed prisoners naked and in sexually humiliating poses.) A former military-intelligence officer who was familiar with practices at Guantánamo told me that a friend who had gone through Level C SERE training, which lasts three weeks, said that he had been sexually ridiculed by females during the program. "They strip you naked and make you do work while women laugh at the size of your 'junk,'" the intelligence officer told me. "Apparently, it's very humiliating." The SERE affiliate described another disturbing training technique: the "mock rape." In this exercise, a female officer stands behind a screen and screams as if she were being violated. A trainee is told that he can stop the rape if he coöperates with his captors.

Erik Saar is a former Army intelligence analyst at Guantánamo and the author of "Inside the Wire," published in May, which first disclosed the interrogation incident involving fake menstrual blood. He told me that the perpetrator of this particular form of abuse might have come up with the idea herself. But he said that the notion of using sexual gambits to unnerve detainees was promoted by "the BSCTs, who were these psychiatrists and psychologists from Fort Bragg." He went on, "The BSCTs would help interrogators strategize about what techniques to use, and where someone would be vulnerable, and what the best ways to manipulate them would be. Sex, I believe, came from the BSCTs. I have a hard time thinking it was a couple of rogue interrogators, if that's what the Army says, because it was very systematic. It wasn't hidden."

The manipulation of national flags for psychological effect is another element of SERE training. The mock captors create psychological stress in trainees by mutilating and burning the American flag, in a procedure known as the "flag dilemma." This technique also has echoes in the experience of detainees at Guantánamo. The American Civil Liberties Union recently revealed the contents of a confidential e-mail written by an F.B.I. agent stationed in Guantánamo to his superiors. It describes a detainee "sitting on the floor of the interview room with an Israeli flag draped around him, loud music being played and a strobe light flashing." Marc Falkoff, a lawyer defending several Guantánamo detainees, informed me of another flag incident. According to Falkoff's clients, a mass suicide attempt at Guantánamo, in August, 2003, in which two dozen or so detainees tried to hang or strangle themselves, was provoked by instances of Koran mistreatment—in-

SKETCHBOOK BY J. J. SEMPÉ



cluding one in which the text was allegedly wrapped inside an Israeli flag and stomped on.

Although the SERE affiliate said that many of the program's officials were careful and dedicated people, he said that "some of the folks" associated with the program seemed to enjoy using manipulative techniques. "They'd play these very aggressive roles, week after week," he said. "It can be very seductive." Although there is no scientific basis for believing that coercive interrogation methods work better than less aggressive ones, the affiliate said that some of the SERE psychologists he knew believed that to get someone to talk "you have to hurt that person."

Retired Army Colonel Patrick Lang, who was both a Special Forces officer and a Defense Intelligence Agency expert on the Middle East, told me that he had attended a SERE school as part of Special Forces training, and had found the experience disconcerting: "Once, I was on the other side of the exercise, acting as captor and interrogator," he said. "If you did too much of that stuff, you could really get to like it. You can manipulate people. And most people like power. I've seen some of these doctors and psychologists and psychiatrists who really think they know how to do this. But it's very easy to go too far."

It is not yet possible to pinpoint when ideas from the SERE program began to influence interrogations of terrorist suspects. But, as early as March, 2002, James Mitchell, a psychologist formerly affiliated with SERE, appeared inside an interrogation room where the C.I.A. was holding a "high-value" Al Qaeda suspect. (The interrogation took place at an undisclosed location.) Mitchell worked for years as a SERE administrator. In an interview, he said that he is now a private contractor and does not currently work with the Department of Defense. Asked if he has worked with the C.I.A., conducting interrogations, he said, "If that was true, I couldn't say anything about it." (A press officer at the C.I.A. also declined to comment on Mitchell.)

According to a counter-terrorism expert familiar with the interrogation of the Al Qaeda suspect, Mitchell announced that the suspect needed to be subjected to rougher methods. The man should be treated like the dogs in a classic behavioral-psychology experiment, he said, referring to studies performed in the nineteen-sixties by Martin Seligman and other graduate students at the University of Pennsylvania. The dogs were placed in harnesses and given electric shocks that they could not avoid; they were then released into pens and shocked again, but this time they were given a chance to escape the punishment. Most of them, Seligman observed, passively accepted the shocks. They had lapsed into a condition that he called "learned helplessness." The suspect's resistance, Mitchell was apparently saying, could be overcome by inducing a similar sense of futility. (Seligman, now a psychology professor at Penn, has spoken at a SERE school about his dog research.)

Mitchell's position was opposed by the counter-terrorism expert, who had not spent time at a SERE school. He reminded Mitchell that he was dealing with human beings, not dogs. According to the expert, Mitchell replied that the experiments were good science. The expert recalled making the argument that the U.S. should not "do things that our enemies do, like using torture." When asked about this incident, Mitchell confirmed that he admired Seligman's research. He declined to comment on any interrogations that he might have taken part in, though he added, "I don't have anything to hide."

Another scientist connected to SERE, Colonel Louie (Morgan) Banks, a senior Army psychologist who is an administrator of the program, has played a significant advisory role in interrogations at Guantánamo Bay. He has recommended that the psychologists working with the BSCTs in Guantánamo have SERE backgrounds. In an interview, Banks said, "I do go down to Guantánamo occasionally. I have provided assistance." He said that he saw no problem with psychologists helping in interrogations, "as long as they don't break the law." Asked to provide details of his consulting work, he said, "I just don't remember any particular cases. I just consulted generally on what approaches to take. It was about what human behavior in captivity is like."

Banks emphatically denied that he had advocated the use of SERE counter-resistance techniques to break down detainees. When asked about the similarities that have emerged between SERE training methods and interrogation practices at Guantánamo, he replied, "I'm not saying people don't do some stupid things sometimes. Some people who received SERE training may have sometimes done things they shouldn't because they misunderstood what the training was about. I'm not going to tell you it didn't happen. I can't say that someone didn't say, 'Hey, let's try waterboarding' because they'd seen it at SERE." In fact, the problem was pervasive enough so that, last year, Banks introduced a new requirement at SERE: graduates must sign a statement promising not to apply the program's counter-resistance methods to U.S.-held detainees. "We did this when we learned people were flipping it," he said.

Banks has a Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Southern Mississippi. A biographical statement for an American Psychological Association task force on psychological ethics and national security, which Banks serves on, mentions that he "provides technical support and consultation to all Army psychologists providing interrogation support." It also notes that, starting in November, 2001, Banks was detailed to Afghanistan, where he spent four months at Bagram Airfield, "supporting combat operations against Al Qaeda and Taliban fighters." In an interview at Guantánamo Bay, General Hood spoke warmly of Banks. "He is a very bright guy," the General said. "He's very qualified. He has assisted in offering assessments on several of our detainees."

Esteban Rodriguez, a Cuban-American civilian who has overseen the interrogation program at Guantánamo since July, 2003, as director of the Joint Intelligence Group, told me that Banks had been a valuable adviser, particularly on the subject of "resistance" to interrogation. "I talk to him all the time," Rodriguez told me in his office at Guantánamo. "He's a very good man."

Rodriguez has had twenty-six years of experience in the field of interrogation. In the nineteen-eighties, he worked for the Defense Intelligence Agency and was stationed in Berlin, where he debriefed émigrés from East Germany. In comparison with the Cold War, he said, the war against terrorism seems confusing and uncivilized. "You don't know who the enemy is," he said. Speaking of Guantánamo, he said, "There are some very dangerous people here." One detainee vowed, if he ever got out, to slit Rodriguez's throat. Rodriguez told me that a number of SERE psychologists had been helpful to the BSCTs at Guantánamo. "The SERE people have learned the psychology of what prisoners of war go through," he said. As a result, he said, "they may have advice, and be able to see certain things going on, such as if this person has been trained in how to avoid interrogation." In such cases, he said, SERE officials can offer valuable advice on "how to use different tactics."

Rodriguez declined to say what kinds of "different tactics" were used on detainees. He emphasized that with most prisoners his interrogators simply tried to use what he called "the direct approach," in order to "build rapport." He said that during his tenure waterboarding had never been used "on this island."

Sex, Rodriguez said, was never offered as an enticement to detainees, but he sometimes used women interrogators, who acted as surrogates for wives and mothers. "It's about finding ways to build rapport," he said, adding, "I wouldn't rule out coercion. It just has to be the individual cases." He estimated that there had been twenty-eight thousand interrogations since Guantánamo opened. Of these, he guessed that "ten to twenty per cent" involved tactics other than just talking. "We do use additional tactics," he acknowledged. "I have a few tools left in my arsenal. I hate to discuss them." He winked. "Nothing to do with coercion or fear."

Rodriguez told me that only a quarter of the detainees hold any intelligence interest for him at this point. The rest, he said, are no longer being interrogated. Even these detainees, however, could remain incarcerated indefinitely. The Pentagon considers many of them to be security threats.

Rodriguez would not reveal which cases SERE psychologists had been directly involved in. However, one clue has emerged. On June 3, 2004, General James T. Hill, of the U.S. Southern Command, held a press conference at which he mentioned how interrogators at Guantánamo had tried to break an especially resistant, and presumably important, detainee. (The detainee's name was not made public.) The detainee, he explained, "had been trained in resistance techniques and was using them." To get him to talk, Hill said, officials at Guantánamo looked for expert help in counter-resistance. He said, "The staff at Guantánamo, working with behavioral scientists, having gone up to our SERE school, developed a list of techniques which our lawyers decided and looked at, [and] said were O.K. I sent that list of techniques up to the Secretary"—Rumsfeld—"and said, in order for us to get at some of these very high-profile, high-value targets who are resistant to techniques, I may need greater flexibility."

Hill, who retired in January, could not be reached for comment. A source familiar with the episode that Hill was describing says that the detainee in question was No. 063, Mohammed al-Qahtani, who was captured in Afghanistan and is reputedly the missing "twentieth hijacker" in the September 11th conspiracy—the plotter who failed to board the United Airlines plane that crashed in Pennsylvania. But by the summer of 2002 military interrogators were reportedly frustrated by their inability to elicit useful information from him.

Documents related to interrogation practices that were released by the Administration last year show that in October, 2002, Guantánamo officials asked the Pentagon for permission to use several harsh interrogation techniques on highly resistant detainees, including isolation, sensory deprivation, removal of clothing, hooding, exploitation of the detainee's phobias (such as a fear of dogs) to induce stress, and "scenarios designed to convince the detainee that death or severely painful consequences are imminent for him and/or his family." The officials also requested permission to use waterboarding.

In a memo to General Richard B. Myers, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Hill wrote that he was "uncertain whether all the techniques" were "legal." He expressed concern that some of them might violate the federal statute against torture. Another obvious obstacle was the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which prohibits U.S. forces from engaging in "cruelty," "maltreatment," or "oppression" of prisoners, and bars both physical assault and threats of injury.

Pentagon lawyers, however, tried to find ways around this, documents released by the Administration show. In October, 2002, Diane Beaver, a lawyer at the Pentagon, wrote a memo to superiors, arguing that waterboarding might "be permissible if not done with the specific intent to cause prolonged mental harm, and absent medical evidence that it would." She added, "Caution should be exercised with this method, as foreign courts have already advised about the potential mental harm that this method may cause." She noted that physical contact with the detainee "will technically constitute an assault under . . . UCMJ." But Beaver's memo implied that if an interrogator were to obtain "immunity" from command authorities in advance, the laws criminalizing waterboarding and other rough techniques could be circumvented. There is no evidence that anyone in the chain of command, apart from Hill, objected to the content of Beaver's memo.

As it turned out, Rumsfeld did not authorize waterboarding or threats to harm family members. Nevertheless, the documents released by the Administration show that in December, 2002, he signed off on sixteen other aggressive counter-resistance techniques for use on Qahtani and others, beyond those authorized in the Army Field Manual. This June, *Time* published a report containing excerpts of the interrogation logs, which revealed that Qahtani was forced to strip naked, told to bark like a dog, deprived of the opportunity to use a toilet after having been force-fed liquids intravenously, ordered to dance with a mask on his face, sat on by a female interrogator, exposed to loud noise, allowed limited sleep, and forced to pick up piles of trash with his hands cuffed while he was called "a pig." According to the *Times*, Qahtani also underwent a phony kidnapping, during which he was injected with tranquillizers and taken up in a plane wearing blackened goggles.

The logs show clearly that a BSCT psychologist participated in the interrogation and they reveal that, after three days of sleep deprivation, Qahtani became ill. A doctor was summoned, and the coercion stopped, but even then Qahtani was subjected to noise levels that kept him from sleeping. His heart rate dropped. A brain scan was performed. He was given an ultrasound, to check for blood clots; none were found. Stephen Xenakis, a psychiatrist and former brigadier general in the Army medical corps, questioned whether the doctors involved notified authorities about how ill the treatment was making Qahtani, as is required by virtually every code of medical ethics. In an e-mail, Xenakis told me, "The clinical picture indicates that the combined effects of the interrogation over December 4-7 contributed to significant physical and metabolic symptoms such that he required close cardiac monitoring. He is evaluated for 'blood clots' . . . which can be fatal." Xenakis asked whether this carefully monitored interrogation, authorized at the top levels of the Pentagon, put "this patient in danger of dying."

According to Elena Nightingale, a pediatrician and the co-editor of a 1985 anthology of essays about doctors and torture, "The Breaking of Bodies and Minds," medical experts are often called on to assist with torture, because "people trust and confide in them, which is useful to torturers, and because they have the know-how to keep a person under torture alive, so that more information can be extracted." Dr. Darryl Matthews, a psychiatrist whom the Army brought in as a consultant after many suicide attempts at Guantánamo, and who has since become a critic of conditions at the prison camp, told me, "As psychiatrists, we know how to hurt people better than others. We can figure out what buttons to push. Like a surgeon with a scalpel, we have techniques and we know what the pressure points are."

Leonard Rubenstein, of Physicians for Human Rights, described the role of psychologists and medical personnel in the Qahtani interrogation as "conduct that's been considered forbidden for thirty years." Psychologists, he said, are subject to the same standards as medical doctors. "Of course they can't participate in coercive interrogations!" he said. "It's clear as day. You can't advise, you can't develop plans, you can't review interrogations, you can't sign off on them, and you can't even be present in the room."

The Pentagon has argued that Qahtani's treatment was rough but always "humane." However, documents released by the A.C.L.U. reveal that F.B.I. officials were disturbed when they learned of it. In May, 2004, for instance, an F.B.I. memo entitled "Detainee Interviews (Abusive Interrogation Issues)" noted the Bureau's "concerns" and "objections" to "SERE techniques to interrogate prisoners."

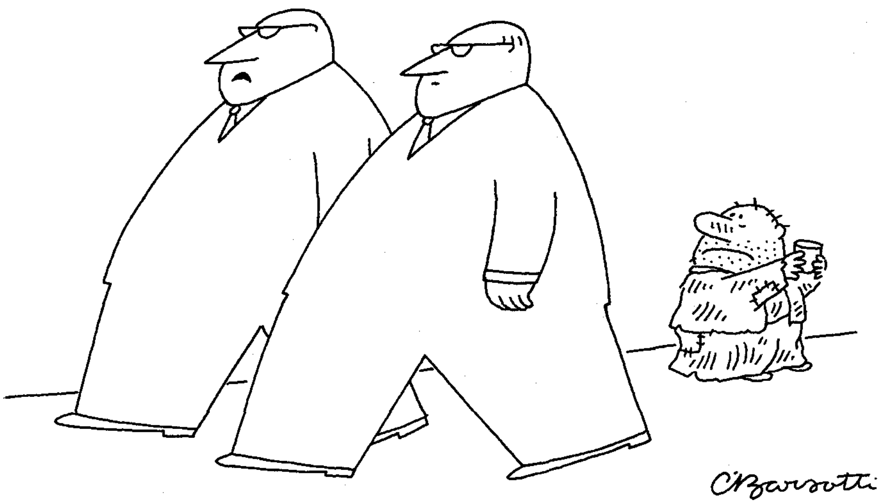
In August of that year, an F.B.I. agent who visited Guantánamo sent an e-mail to his superiors. "On a couple of occasions, I entered interview rooms to find a detainee chained hand and foot in a fetal position to the floor, with no chair, food or water," he wrote. "Most times they had urinated or defecated on themselves, and had been left there for 18 to 24 hours or more." The agent related that he had also visited an "almost unconscious" prisoner in a room where the temperature was "probably well above 100 degrees." There was a "pile of hair next to him." (He seemed to have pulled out his own hair.)

In a subsequent letter, other F.B.I. agents claimed to have observed, in November, 2002, a Guantánamo detainee "after he had been subjected to intense isolation for over three months." The letter continues, "During that time period, [the detainee] was totally isolated (with the exception of occasional interrogations) in a cell that was always flooded with light. By late November, the detainee was evidencing behavior consistent with extreme psychological trauma (talking to non-existent people, reporting hearing voices, crouching in a corner of the cell covered with a sheet for hours on end)."

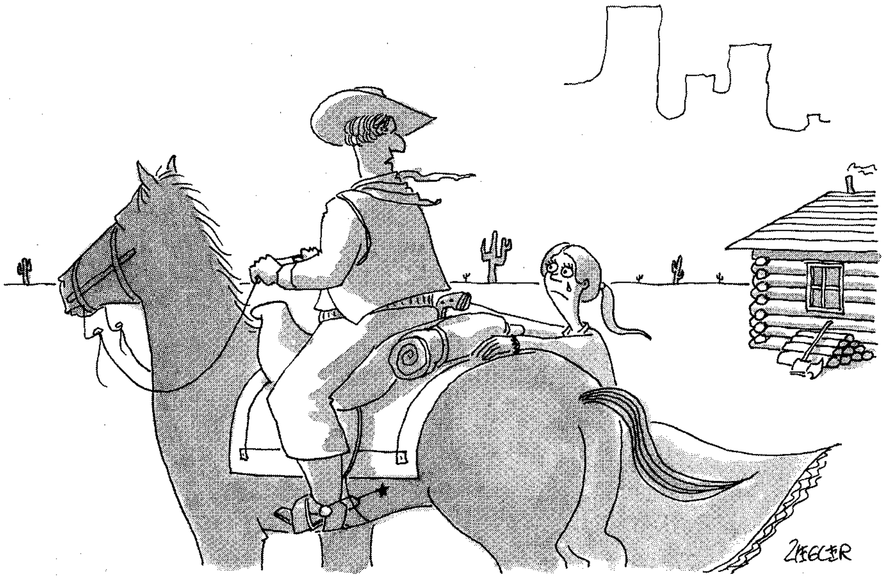
Soon after the establishment of the Guantánamo camp, the F.B.I. sent several of its top counter-terrorism agents to the prison to interview detainees. By the fall of 2002, these agents believed that they were making progress with detainees, including Qahtani, by slowly establishing a dynamic of friendly rapport. According to several sources at the F.B.I., when General Miller assumed his administrative role at Guantánamo he became impatient with the F.B.I. interrogations, and insisted that harsher methods be used. The agents said that even if other interrogators managed to break the detainees through force the intelligence would be unreliable, and it would be impossible to prosecute the cases in any U.S. court. These clashes are now under investigation by the Justice Department's Inspector General, who is trying to determine if laws were broken during interrogations at Guantánamo and elsewhere.

A former F.B.I. official who has extensive experience interviewing terrorist suspects spoke to me at length about his battles with Department of Defense officials. The former official said that he had used only noncoercive, "rapport-based" techniques in his interviews with terrorist suspects. "You can know how evil suspects are, and still make them think you're their friend," he said.

The former official said that he and other F.B.I. agents didn't want to interview detainees without first reading them their Miranda rights. But the military officers argued that if detainees were read their rights "they'd be able to get lawyers and due process, which would clog the whole system." The former official said that he told a Pentagon official, "Some of these techniques, I don't want to see, or be part of. I took an oath to the Constitution to uphold the laws against enemies both inside the U.S. and out." He recalled, "The D.O.D. guy got really upset. He said he took the oath, too. I told him that we must have different interpretations, then." (A Pentagon spokesman said, "Miranda rights are not applicable to enemy



"Is it my fault he guessed the wrong hand?"



"Let me go, honey. That eight-o'clock commuter express out of Yuma don't wait for no man."

• •

combatants detained in the war on terrorism. . . . They are treated in accordance with the Geneva Conventions subject to military necessity.")

The former F.B.I. official said that he opposed coercion on practical grounds, as much as anything else. "I don't believe these things make successful strategies—sensory deprivation and such," he said. "There's a big lack of knowledge about the mind-set of extremists. Doing these things just makes them more determined to hate us. And eventually they are going to be released. When they are, they're going to talk and exaggerate what happened to them. They're going to become heroes. So then we'll have more extremist networks and more suicide bombers." He also felt that there was a moral imperative to avoid coercive interrogations. "We can't go down to the level of our enemies," he said. "If we do, it's going to come back at us later on."

Officials at the Washington headquarters of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service were also incensed by the use of coercive techniques at Guantánamo. Some N.C.I.S. officials are participating in a combined task force preparing detainee cases for eventual prosecution, and they had access to computerized versions of the interrogation logs at Guantánamo. When the officials read the details of Qahtani's interrogation, they had an extraordinary internal dispute.

According to a passage in Vice-Admiral Church's report that is unclassified but has not been released to the public, in December, 2002, Dr. Michael Gelles, the chief psychologist at the N.C.I.S., spoke with Alberto J. Mora, the Navy's general counsel, saying that, in his professional opinion, "abusive techniques" and "coercive psychological procedures" were being used on Qahtani at Guantánamo. Gelles warned of a phenomenon known as "force drift," in which interrogators encountering resistance begin to lose the ability to restrain themselves.

In July, 2004, Mora wrote a memo to Church's investigative team, in which he recounted his discussion with Gelles. He said that he had found the tactics he had read about in the Qahtani interrogation logs to be "unlawful and unworthy of the military services." Mora argued that these practices "threaten the entire military commission process." According to the Church report, an N.C.I.S. official subsequently said that if the abusive practices continued "N.C.I.S. would have to consider whether to remain co-located" in Guantánamo. According to a recent ABC News report, in January, 2003, Mora also told William J. Haynes, the Pentagon's general counsel, that "the use of coercive techniques" could expose both interrogators and their administrators to criminal prosecution.

That same month, Rumsfeld suspended his earlier authorization of harsh interrogation methods at Guantánamo. He put together a working group on the subject of interrogation, which, on March 6, 2003, drafted a memo stating that to continue using such aggressive techniques would require Presidential authorization. There is no evidence to date that such an authorization was granted.

Eight days after the release of the draft memo, the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel released a classified legal opinion clarifying the Administration's policy on interrogation. Vice-Admiral Church was allowed to read the document, but he was not given a copy. According to Church, the memo's language was "virtually identical" to an August, 2002, memo approved by Jay S. Bybee, then the assistant attorney general, in which torture was defined as anything causing pain comparable to "physical injury such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death."

The pressure on interrogators, meanwhile, particularly during 2002 and 2003, remained intense. The military-intelligence officer who was familiar with practices at Guantánamo told me that the order from above was "Get me results!" He said, "There was huge frustration. General Miller really unleashed a lot of aggressive tactics." He added, "At the time, we didn't even understand what Al Qaeda *was*. We thought the detainees were all masterminds. It wasn't the case. Most of them were just dirt farmers in Afghanistan."

Earlier this year, a former interrogator at Guantánamo, whose statement to a lawyer was obtained by *The New Yorker*, said that he had refused to use more "assertive" methods on the detainees, and had incurred the anger of his superiors. Extensive records of interrogations were meticulously kept, he said, in what were called "knowledgeability briefs," copies of which were sent to officials at the Pentagon. The former interrogator said that BSCT psychologists were heavily involved in drawing up and monitoring interrogation plans, which were designed individually for each detainee. At least one of the BSCT scientists he worked with, he said, was a medical doctor. Sleep deprivation was such a common technique, he said, that the interrogators called the process of moving detainees every hour or two from one cell to another "the frequent-flier program." He said that interrogators also used pornography to manipulate detainees, giving pictures as a reward to compliant prisoners who were not religious, and forcing "noncompliant" Muslims to look at them. Detainees were routinely shackled in painful "stress positions." The interrogator said that he overheard colleagues talking about the possibility of waterboarding detainees, but he never saw waterboarding used himself.

Until the spring of 2003, the former interrogator said, he had open access to detainees' medical histories. But after that he had to go to the medical staff whenever he had a health-related question, and a staff person would retrieve the records. As an example, the interrogator provided details of a medical problem involving a detainee who claimed that his eyesight was deteriorating. The interrogator said he knew that the detainee had a genuine problem with his eyes, because "I read it in his medical files." When he mentioned the detainee's medical complaints to authorities, he said, they refused to do anything, saying, "Fuck him. He should have gotten the medical help before he went on his jihad."

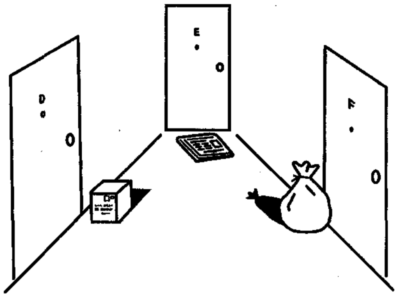
A Guantánamo detainee who appears to fit this description is Rhuhel Ahmed. In 2004, Ahmed, a British citizen, was released without charges. A statement put out by his lawyer says, in part, "Rhuhel in particular has suffered irreversible damage to his eyes. He suffers from a condition where the cornea of his eye is misshapen (into a shape like a rugby ball). The condition is controllable by a gas-permeable contact lens. . . . Throughout the time he was at Guantánamo, he was urgently asking for lenses. . . . No lenses were ever provided. . . . His eyesight has drastically deteriorated as a result."

In the former interrogator's view, fewer than a quarter of the detainees had any intelligence value. More important, he said that most of the coercive methods used on the detainees at Guantánamo were counterproductive. As he explained to the lawyer, "If you don't have a terrorist now, you will by the time he leaves."

Esteban Rodriguez, the chief of interrogations, said that the interrogations at Guantánamo have provided invaluable information that may have saved American lives. He said that he still uses BSCT members in interviews with detainees. He also said that he doesn't use techniques such as sleep deprivation, sexual humiliation, or isolation. "I have no place to isolate people!" he said. This argument seemed dubious after I toured Camp Five, a new maximum-security facility in Guantánamo Bay, in which high-value detainees are confined in sealed white climate-controlled cells. (Officials later explained that they call this "segregation," not "isolation.")

Lawyers for the detainees also dispute Rodriguez's claim. Although they acknowledge that the situation at Guantánamo has improved, they say that some of the aggressive techniques are still practiced. Joshua Colangelo-Bryan, an associate at Dorsey & Whitney, a law firm that represents six detainees from Bahrain, recently told me, "I have clients who have been kept for over a year in cells by themselves. Other than for interrogations or occasional showers, they are allowed out of their cells for no more than an hour of exercise a week, during which they are alone in small exercise pens. That those who run Guantánamo choose not to describe these arrangements as isolation or solitary confinement does not change reality. My clients have been utterly deprived of human contact—other than with interrogators and guards—for over a year and, according to the government, could be deprived of human contact for the rest of their lives."

During Colangelo-Bryan's last two visits to Guantánamo, in October, 2004, and March, 2005, one of his clients, Jumah al-Dossari, a Bahraini whom U.S. authorities caught in the Tora Bora region of Afghanistan, described his experience. Dossari said that a man who called himself Dr. P.—and who military police told him was a psychiatrist—had ordered him placed in isolation and deprived of both toilet paper and water for washing himself. Another psychiatrist quizzed him in detail about his childhood. On a separate occasion, he said, an interrogator wrapped him in Israeli and American flags. The interrogator told him that there was a war going on between the Star of David and the Cross, on one side, and the Red Crescent, on the other. Then, Dossari said, the interrogator stepped on a Koran. Dossari told Colangelo-Bryan that he found the whole experience "bizarre."



Dossari also claimed that he was beaten by riot police after he complained about personal items having been moved in his cell. During the beating, which was corroborated by Human Rights Watch, his head was bashed so hard against the metal floor that he fainted. He was taken to the naval hospital, where he was given a brain scan. According to Dr. Edmondson, the Navy captain, no doctor raised any questions with him about abusive treatment of Dossari.

Dossari also told Colangelo-Bryan that one time he was taken into an interrogation room whose door was open to an adjacent room filled with computers. Military police shackled him to the floor, he said. In the computer room, a naked man and woman were having sex on a table. Afterward, he said, the man put on his clothes and started to question him, telling him that if he coöperated he, too, could have sex with his "girlfriend." Dossari said that he did not respond. (Esteban Rodriguez said that he had never heard of such an incident.)

Dossari claims to have spent the past eighteen months in solitary confinement. Colangelo-Bryan said that he had concerns about his client's mental state. He told me, "On the last day of one visit, as I was about to leave, he looked me directly in the eye and in a very quiet voice asked, 'What can I do to keep myself from going crazy?' "

Exerting psychic stress is, of course, the goal of the SERE program. To the extent that scientists and doctors are implicated in this process, Jonathan Moreno, the bioethicist, worries that "Guantánamo is going to haunt us for a long time." He said, "The Hippocratic oath is the oldest ethical code we have. We might abandon our morality about other professions. But the medical profession is sort of the last gasp. If we give that up, we've given up our core values." ♦

LETTER FROM BEIJING

THE TURTLES

How an unlikely couple became China's best-known real-estate moguls.

BY JIANYING ZHA

Zhang Xin likes to talk about her fascination with left-wing British intellectuals during her years at Sussex and Cambridge. Pan Shiyi, her husband, is a believer in Taoism who describes himself as a "feudal" Gansu country boy. When you see them on television and in magazines, they are often dressed in a kind of Shanghai-Tang chic: Pan, with his black-framed techno glasses, might be wearing a silk brocade jacket; Zhang, with a dyed streak of ash-blond hair right above the eyes, might have on a sleeveless linen top with a mandarin collar and butterfly buttons. They look like art dealers or film producers. In fact, they build apartment complexes, office towers, and shopping plazas. At the ages of thirty-nine and forty-one, respectively, Zhang and Pan are the co-C.E.O.s of the Beijing-based firm SOHO China, and the most visible real-estate developers in the country.

On a cold spring day last year, Pan and Zhang hosted a gala to celebrate the opening of their latest project, Jianwai SOHO, twelve white minimalist high-rises arranged in a tilted phalanx on a prime block of Changan Avenue, Beijing's main boulevard. Despite persistent drizzle, hundreds of luminaries showed up: businessmen and government officials, architects, publishers, artists, fashion editors, actors. A sudden downpour turned the open-air ribbon-cutting ceremony into a brave dash through the rain, spoiling starched clothing and fancy hairdos; at the formal dinner for five hundred guests in a gigantic white tent, some people were shivering in the evening chill. But glamour prevailed, as models sauntered down an improvised catwalk wearing Bulgari jewelry and Valentino couture. Later, a pair of professional dancers from South America performed a tango. The hosts worked the floor separately. They stepped onto the dais together only once. Pan, in a dark Prada suit, thanked the guests in Chinese. Zhang, in sky-blue silk embroidered with yellow dragons, offered appreciative remarks in English for the benefit of the many international guests.

The evening reminded me of a similar occasion, two years earlier, celebrating the completion of Architectural Gallery, at the foot of the Great Wall, a pet project of Pan and Zhang's. The gallery featured twelve fanciful houses, each designed by a prominent Asian architect. One, by Shigeru Ban, was a house made of laminated bamboo. Another, designed by Yung Ho Chang, a Beijing architect who was trained in California, was built entirely of packed earth. Each of the twelve houses was priced at a million dollars, which, even for Beijing's newly rich, was a daunting sum to spend on a weekend residence that was more of a designer's conceit than an example of luxury living. The project has since been renamed the Commune by the Great Wall and, partly because of the publicity it generated, has done well as a convention center and tourist attraction.

Jianwai SOHO is far larger in scale: when everything is completed, there will be twenty high-rise towers and four villas, encompassing seven hundred thousand square metres, and its projected sale value is about $1.2 billion. The price per square metre, at about two thousand dollars, is high but not beyond the reach of the intended clientele, who have been drawn by the buildings' style, a contemporary blend of concrete, steel, and glass with interiors of fine-finish woodwork. By the time of the gala, eighty per cent of the units had been sold.

The gala wasn't the only promotional event Zhang and Pan had arranged for the complex. Earlier that afternoon, in a conference hall inside one of Jianwai SOHO'S buildings, they presided over a forum called "A Dialogue Among Architects: China and the World." Besides Riken Yamamoto, the Japanese architect who designed Jianwai SOHO, the most prominently featured speaker was Patrick Schumacher, the partner of the celebrated Baghdad-born architect Zaha Hadid, who was then designing another project of Pan and Zhang's: an upscale apartment complex on Changan Avenue near Jianwai SOHO. Schumacher showed slides and spoke to a packed hall, with Zhang standing nearby to translate for him. On a screen behind him, a cluster of buildings shimmered, their color somewhere between silver and gold. I have heard the Hadid design described as a "school of fish."

The image that often arises when people speak of Pan and Zhang is that of a pair of turtles. In China, people like Zhang, who have spent time in the West, are known as *hai gui*—a pun on "sea turtle" and "returnee from the sea." As the Chinese economy has become more integrated into the global market, *hai gui* have grown numerous. ("Globalization means going home," one *hai gui* said to me.) By contrast, people like Pan are represented by *tu bie*, the local turtles. The *hai gui* are valued for their international perspective; the *tu bie* are the ones who know how to get things done. Pan and Zhang have become the best-known *tu bie-hai gui* team in China. But, as they've learned, the alliance between *tu bie* and *hai gui* isn't always without friction.

China has been called the world's biggest construction site; everywhere you turn in cities like Beijing, there are cranes, scaffolds, steel rebars, skeletons of old buildings, half-finished new ones. Yet the people who are directly responsible for this constant din have largely stayed out of the public eye, and not without reason. Developers are regarded as China's robber barons, men who have taken advantage of the muddled transition to capitalism by means of *guanxi* (connections), bribery, and fraud.

If you bring up the subject of developers at a dinner party, someone will tell you about a building that has started to fall apart after two years, or relate a story of

The marriage of a Wall Street banker and a Beijing developer was heralded as "East meets West." Photograph by Thái-Công Quách.

forced eviction, where neighborhood residents fall victim to deals made between officials and developers. A recent television series called "The Winter Solstice" reflects this popular view. It's a portrait of a picturesque old town in central China that is undone by the onslaught of development, and features a moblike building company: its bosses are greedy, scheming predators, their underlings thuggish killers. A Beijing real-estate entrepreneur told me, "Of all the shows I've watched, this comes closest to a realistic portrayal of contemporary reality—though it shows only the tip of the iceberg." Pan Shiyi, who says that he hopes to change the image of his profession, has certainly seen it at its worst.

Pan never planned on a career as a developer. Born in a poor village in the barren northwest province of Gansu, he grew up in the shadow of hunger and political misfortune: his father was labelled a "rightist"; his mother was an invalid. Pan and his siblings often worried about not having enough to eat. It was a considerable achievement when, after getting his college diploma in Langfang, near Beijing, he was assigned to an office job as one of more than forty thousand bureaucrats in the Oil Pipeline Bureau of the Petroleum Ministry. Still, he became convinced that it was a job without a future.

"I resigned because that was an open and exciting time," Pan recalled, as we sat in his large but sparely furnished office in SOHO New Town, a complex of high-rise towers he has built on the east side of the capital. The floor-to-ceiling windows offered a bird's-eye view of the bustling, traffic-jammed Changan Avenue, a dramatic contrast to the hushed and orderly interiors. His large black desk was free of paper; his deputies and secretaries were keeping out of the way. "The words and actions of the nation's leaders, such as Hu Yaobang"—the reformist Party General Secretary, whose later disgrace and death triggered the 1989 Tiananmen protests—"wearing a Western suit, made a very big impact on people," he went on. "In that kind of atmosphere, I came to feel that my office job was redundant, useless."

In 1989, Pan made his way south to the backward island province of Hainan, which had just been declared a "special economic zone," exempt from many of the usual rules of state socialism. It was a "dirty, stinky mess," he recalled, largely without electricity. After sleeping on damp pillows in a moldy seaside establishment, Pan took a morning walk with a friend and discovered that the locals used the beach as a toilet. "A man's taking a shit over there, and here comes a guy trying to sell watches to us. He rolls up a sleeve, and all sorts of watches are strapped around his arm. My friend chooses one, but the watch guy says, 'No sale for you.' My friend says, 'Why not?' The watch guy says, 'Because your wallet has been stolen.' We turn around and the pickpocket is right there, squatting on his heels not far from us. We give chase, he runs. The islanders run much faster than us. And the moment we are out of wind and stop, the pickpocket stops, too, and squats again. That was my first Hainan experience."

Finally, in 1992, Deng Xiaoping made his famous "southern tour" and called for faster and more thoroughgoing market reforms. The central government granted further exemptions to develop Hainan, creating a sort of free-enterprise zone that was among the least regulated in the country. Pan and five other young men he met in the south, all educated northerners, decided to form their own company, the Vantone Group, and try their hand at real estate. But they needed money.

Feng Lun, one of the Vantone founders, used to be the deputy chief of a State Council think tank and had government contacts in both Beijing and Hainan. The six men lobbied a state company from Beijing and impressed its boss with their business plan. The boss agreed to lend them five million yuan if they would pay twenty per cent in interest and half of future profits. They bought eight villas, at three thousand yuan (about three hundred and fifty dollars) per square metre. Two months went by, and there were no buyers. Day after day, the young speculators sat in their shabby office, trying to figure a way out.

"We prayed and prayed for something to happen," Pan said. By the third month, buyers began to show up. Pan set the price at forty-one hundred yuan per square metre, and landed his first client: an entrepreneur from Shanxi. The moment another buyer arrived, from Inner Mongolia, Pan pushed the price up to forty-two hundred. Soon, he

"Quality time? Do I have to?"

was selling villas at twice the initial price.

This kind of real-estate speculation was a major part of Hainan's legend of wealth creation; a horde of adventurers and speculators were hyping and flipping properties. In the local idiom, the process is called *chao lou*, "stir-fry buildings." Many latter-day "capitalists" were born, in a process that Marx-conscious Chinese scholars have called "primitive accumulation."

Feng Lun, who is now the chairman of the Vantone Group, described the Hainan period to me as resembling the gold rush in the American West: weak government controls, vague regulations, a stampede of fortune hunters. "Lots of strange things happened there," he told me as we sat in a cigar chamber at a plush Beijing hotel. A wiry, genial man with rimless glasses, his thinning hair carefully brushed across his scalp, Feng looked more like a scholar than like a business tycoon. "For example, in a business quarrel you'd be tricked into a night club where you'd be shoved up against a wall in a dark room, with a gun pressed in your belly, and you'd be forced to sign a contract. This happened to people in our company. From time to time, someone would just disappear—murdered. Official seals were being faked all the time. But it was a very happy time. Because you suddenly arrived in a completely free zone—no law, no restrictions, no need to care about all that rotten traditional stuff."

Feng told colorful tales of uptight Beijing cadres going to Hainan night clubs—brothels, essentially—where they were ministered to by "little misses," and of their evolution from excruciating awkwardness to debauchery. "When your local hosts asked you to go to a night club, you could not refuse," he told me. "Because that's where people discussed business. You say, 'I'm pure'? Then no business for you." It took Feng, with his State Council background, a while to get used to the absence of order and security. "Then you discovered that life was very free and very crazy, and you enjoyed it very much. Experiences like that would change your view of the world, your norms of right and wrong." Feng described his education as "totally orthodox," "fundamentalist Marxism." He had joined the Communist Youth League at fifteen, the Party at twenty, and had been a student cadre all the way from grade school to graduate school. "But, in the end, *bah!* I've changed completely."

"And you've become a bad man?" I asked. (Bad man, *huai ren*, was a term jestingly applied to those rule-breaking Hainan adventurers.) On another occasion, I'd heard Feng describe himself as "a good man among bad men, but a bad man among good men."

He laughed. "No, I think I've become a *normal* man."

When Pan talks about Hainan, he stresses the business side of things, and invokes the dot-com era of Silicon Valley: "You are involved in raising market prices, and everyone is investing. You control an angle, and make sure you get out in time. Not getting into a big rising market is stupid. But the smart ones don't just drift with the tide. Go up when you can, and, while others are still going, retreat if you think it's time." During a visit to the local planning bureau, Pan noticed two sets of figures. First, Hainan had far more temporary than full-time residents. Second, on a per-capita basis, Hainan, though still a poor island, was building seven times faster than Beijing. This was a case of overbuilding, he concluded. It was time to pull out. Shortly before the Hainan real-estate market collapsed, Pan borrowed fifty thousand yuan from the company account and left for Beijing.

Zhang Xin comes from a long line of Chinese immigrant merchants who settled in Burma. In the nineteen-fifties, as waves of anti-Chinese sentiment swept across Southeast Asia, her parents decided to move back to their ancestral land. Married in Beijing, they were both assigned jobs as translators at the Bureau of Foreign Languages. But the Cultural Revolution did them in: the two joined rival factions and, Zhang recalled, started fighting viciously. The couple separated in 1970, when Zhang was only five years old. Immediately afterward, her mother took her off to a cadre camp in the Henan countryside.

It was a difficult childhood. Her mother, a feisty, hardworking woman, dropped her off at the homes of various relatives and friends whenever she found her inconvenient. Zhang says that she was transferred seven or eight times in her elementary-school years. Even after she and her mother moved back to Beijing, in 1972, life was a struggle. "We slept on office desks at first," Zhang recalled. "Every night, we laid out dictionaries on the desk, and stretched out on them."

Unlike most Chinese children, Zhang was accustomed to foreigners. Plenty of them hung around the Bureau, and all sorts of movies in "weird foreign tongues" were shown there. "I have a natural sensitivity to languages," Zhang said. "Not like Pan Shiyi. He was brought up in a monolingual environment. If a foreigner speaks Chinese with the slightest accent, he'd think the guy was speaking a foreign tongue."

In 1980, when Zhang was fourteen, she followed her mother to Hong Kong, where they lived in a tiny room and had almost no money. For a while, they both worked in a garment factory. Later, Zhang got an assembly-line job at an electronics manufacturing plant.

"They were giant buildings," she said with a grimace. "Over twenty floors high, with hundreds of assembly lines inside, each line a small plant. The workers had no sense of belonging. They switched jobs—maybe just to the plant across the hallway—over the smallest pay raise." Competition was intense, but always at a low level; quick hands were all that counted. Zhang yearned to become a clerk in a quiet office.

Two years later, at the age of sixteen, she got a job as a warehouse clerk, fell in love with the math teacher at her night school, and, for a while, was content. But in 1984 a childhood friend visiting Hong Kong "turned my whole world upside down," Zhang recalled. The young man could speak English and attended college. "Gosh, your life here is really no good," he told Zhang. "You should go to America."

She went to England instead. In 1987, having spent a couple of years learning English at an Oxford secretarial school, Zhang received grants and a scholarship that enabled her to attend the University of Sussex. A gathering place for the British intellectual left, the Sussex campus was, in her eyes, full of idealists and eccentrics. She remembers one classmate who never washed his long hair. ("It looked like a shiny mushroom over his head.") But, above all, she was fascinated by her leftist professors. "Many of them took part in the sixties movements. Their understanding of Communism was purely romantic, a metaphysical probing so different from ours."

By then, most Chinese students there had lost their faith in Communism, but Zhang wanted to side with the romantic Europeans. "The Chinese talked endlessly about Cultural Revolution sufferings, while thinking about how to get their 'eight big pieces' home," she said. (The "eight big pieces" refers to electronic housewares such as televisions, tape recorders, and washing machines, which were scarce in China then.) "I also experienced the life of Hong Kong assembly lines. Communism was complex for me."

Then came the events at Tiananmen Square. "I stopped going to classes," Zhang recalled. "For a whole semester, I was glued to the television. All the Chinese on campus were like that. As soon as news of the massacre came, we took the night train to London to demonstrate in front of the Chinese Embassy. There must have been ten thousand of us there. That was the single most exciting moment in my college life."

Zhang wrote her thesis on privatization in China. "I was very skeptical," she told me. "It was all about the problems privatization would cause." After graduating from Sussex, in 1991, Zhang worked on a master's degree in economics at Cambridge. The other Chinese graduate students she met there were an ambitious group of young intellectuals; some of them had been involved in the nineteen-eighties reforms back home. In their gatherings, the future of China was a constant topic, and Zhang felt certain that her own future was in her homeland.

While she was completing her master's degree, Barings, P.L.C., sent scouts to Cambridge: their Hong Kong branch needed people to analyze privatization in China. Because Zhang had written her thesis on the topic, she was hired immediately. Going to Hong Kong, she figured, would be the first step toward moving back to China. She didn't know that her Barings unit was about to be acquired by Goldman, Sachs. By the summer of 1993, she found herself on Wall Street.

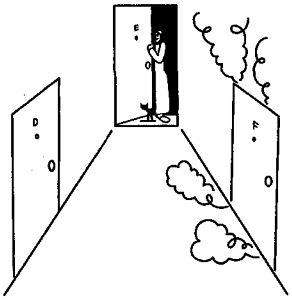
As Zhang Xin was starting off as a young Wall Street analyst, Pan was embarking on a new business adventure in Beijing. One day, while he was having lunch with some local officials, he heard that the municipal government had just issued a document allowing the experimental creation of shareholding companies. Frantic preparations followed. Pan went to every official contact that the Vantone partners had in Beijing to shore up their support. He lobbied several state enterprises and enlisted them as co-founders of a new shareholding company. Finally, six months later, Beijing Vantone Industry, Ltd., was registered. The partners decided to put down eight hundred million yuan (a hundred million dollars) as the company's capital. In Chinese, the word for "eight" rhymes with the word for "prosper."

But this was largely money on paper. Under the new regulations, the company had two months in which to raise the funds by floating shares. Pan placed a full-page ad in a Chinese financial newspaper. It caught the eye of the vice-chairman of the State Stocks Security Committee, who alerted various officials. Pan was ordered to appear before a joint hearing at the System Reform Commission.

Facing a roomful of officials, each holding a copy of the Vantone ad, Pan recalls sweat beading on his face: would he be found in violation of some rule? "Young man, relax," one official said, and asked Pan about their new stockholder's certificate. Pan told the official that the company had printed on the certificate all the policy guidelines from the System Reform Commission. The official nodded approvingly: the Beijingers do things by the rules, better than those in Hainan. He took out a stock certificate made in Hainan: "Look, this is just a receipt they bought on the streets!" As it turned out, the experiment on shareholding companies had started a new national craze. Since China had no existing company laws, the officials had to make up the rules along the way, and were conducting hearings in an effort to find their bearings.

Pan remembers listening to a moody song called "Like Wind, Like Fog, Like Rain" on the drive home; he says that it captured his state of mind exactly. He wasn't at all sure how to play the Beijing market. But he wasn't inclined to hold back, either.

The company's next project, Vantone New World Plaza, was a giant office-and-shopping complex in the heart of Beijing. Pan attributes its success to the simple fact that advertising was a novelty in China. Vantone spent ten million yuan on a marketing campaign—an astronomical figure then—and it was able to take out big ads in major papers like the overseas edition of *People's Daily*, Shanghai's *Wenhui Daily*, and Hong Kong's *Dagong Daily*. Prices for the Vantone New World Plaza soared to six thousand dollars per square metre, an unprecedented figure in Beijing. All the units sold while contractors were breaking ground. Eventually, the company more than tripled its investment.



Zhang Xin made good money on Wall Street—a six-figure salary with various perks and benefits—but she detested the ethos of the place. "On Wall Street, all values seemed upside down," she said. "People spoke crassly, treated others badly, looked down on the poor and adored the rich. They'd do anything to get promoted. Whoever made the most profit was a hero, and everyone was fighting everyone else." It reminded her of the Hong Kong assembly line. "The difference is, in Hong Kong the competition turns people into shortsighted mice, whereas on Wall Street it turns them into wolves and tigers."

Zhang did a lot of travelling. "I lived out of a suitcase, travelling to three cities per week, running around without knowing why I was doing all this," she recalled. "I never had to use my judgment. The work had nothing to do with what I studied at school. In fact, I don't see why they need all those highly educated people. It's a waste of talent."

In 1994, she left Goldman, Sachs to become an investment banker at the Travelers Group, where the work was less stressful but the travel remained intense. She yearned to move back to China. A Cambridge classmate suggested that she check out an "interesting" Chinese company called Vantone.

On a flight to China, weary and bored, Zhang took out the prospectus that her classmate had mailed to her. It was Vantone's mission statement. The title read like a manifesto—"Break through brambles and thorns, to the future we strive together"—and the prose continued in the same exalted language. "It got me so excited!" she recalled. "The way these young intellectuals wanted to contribute to their country, their grand ideas about building enterprises—suddenly I found my kindred spirits in all my romantic longings." It was May, 1994. As soon as her plane landed in Beijing, she arranged a meeting with the Vantone partners.

Four days after Pan and Zhang were introduced, he proposed. "He's extremely sensitive to opportunities," Zhang said, smiling.

From the beginning, though, their relationship was to be a business partnership as well as a personal one. Pan had some vague ideas about attracting foreign capital, but he didn't know how to go about it. Zhang wanted to find a role for herself in China, but she didn't know where to begin. She found everything about Vantone, including its muddleheaded, overreaching business style, endearing. When she was taken to a construction site, she was awed. "I had never seen a huge open pit like that in my life," she said. "It was gigantic, and suddenly a sensation flooded my veins: China, a great expanse of land and horizon. It was grand. And then I went on a trip with the guys, sailing down the Yangtze. They'd hold their board meetings on the boat, and I'd join them at mealtimes. It felt so different from Wall Street."

Zhang and Pan were married in October, 1994. A year later, Pan decided to leave Vantone, and Zhang left Wall Street. She and Pan would start their own company. They called it Hongshi. (It was renamed SOHO China three years ago.)

"Feng Lun must hate me," Zhang told me when I mentioned having met with the chairman of Vantone.

"Because you're the Yoko Ono who broke up the band?"

Zhang laughed, but that was her point. Still, Pan's old partners have flourished as well. At one of the busiest intersections in Beijing, Pan and Feng each beam from two giant billboards, their portraits about fifty yards apart.

"East meets West" and "Local unites with foreign" was how the Beijing media touted the alliance. But tensions between *hai gui* and *tu bie* arose almost immediately. On their honeymoon trip, to the Great Barrier Reef, they had a heated argument. Pan was enraged by his bride's neo-Marxist ideas: how ignorant, how callous toward Chinese suffering she was! Zhang, for her part, was shocked by Pan's lack of idealism. The relationship grew even stormier when they began working together in their own company. Zhang now says that 1996 and 1997 were the hardest years of her life: she and her husband fought daily.

In some ways, it was a clash between East and West. Zhang might have felt like an outsider on Wall Street, but in the world of Chinese business she was seen as so Westernized that she was practically a foreigner. She wanted regular staff meetings where everyone was informed about company issues and could contribute suggestions, because, she insisted, democracy was the way to manage and solve problems. But Pan's experiences had convinced him that the way to run a company was to follow his own instincts: no questions, no explanations, no overlapping voices. "A country needs democracy, but a business needs autocracy, or it'll go down the tubes," he told his staff.

Relations between Zhang and her husband's old employees, who had followed him from Vantone, were also delicate. These men viewed Pan's "foreign wife" with suspicion and jealousy, and Zhang found little sympathy for her ideas about quality and detail. Every time she rejected something that was done by her staff—and in the beginning she found ninety-nine per cent of the work "not up to the standard"—she'd get the same response: "You don't understand the Chinese situation." The Chinese situation, evidently, required a kind of "make do" mentality. Gradually, Zhang began to doubt her experiments in workplace democracy. It seemed to result in people talking rather than working, and, she discovered, once the sense of hierarchy was weakened, it was hard to order people around. She began to feel defeated.

To Beijingers, the names Pan Shiyi and Zhang Xin are linked to one large apartment-office complex, SOHO New Town. This was Hongshi's first major project, and it hadn't looked promising. The land belonged to a large liquor factory, and the stench was detectable from a great distance. Pan and Zhang went to survey the site on a rainy day, and, plodding through the mud and holding her nose, Zhang decided that it was too unpleasant to build on.

Pan had a different view. The land was on a major avenue in the fast-growing

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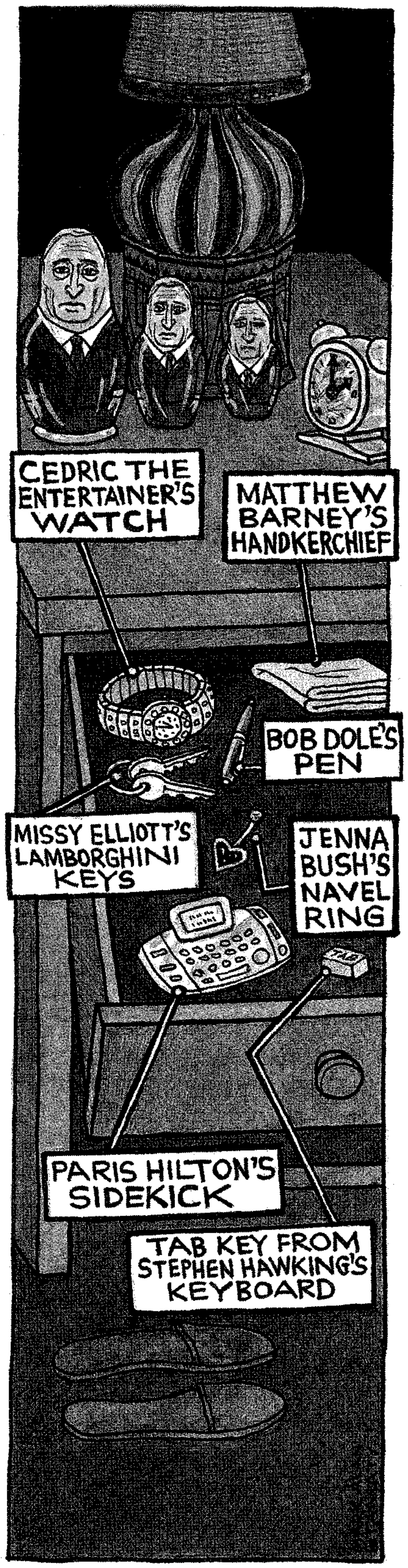
PUTIN'S NIGHTSTAND

Following a meeting of American business executives and Russian President Vladimir Putin, New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft showed Putin his 2005 Super Bowl ring—which Putin kept.

—*CBS News.*


CEDRIC THE ENTERTAINER'S WATCH
MATTHEW BARNEY'S HANDKERCHIEF
BOB DOLE'S PEN
MISSY ELLIOTT'S LAMBORGHINI KEYS
JENNA BUSH'S NAVEL RING
PARIS HILTON'S SIDEKICK
TAB KEY FROM STEPHEN HAWKING'S KEYBOARD

BEN GREENMAN/MARK ALAN STAMATY

"Mr. Bloxton is running late. He suggests you begin sucking up without him."

• •

Chaoyang district, near an area with a concentration of foreign embassies, international hotels, and shopping plazas. Traditionally, Beijing had developed along the north-south axis, but a recent trend suggested a rapid expansion toward the east side. New subway lines and highways were due to open in two years; plans to clean up the foul-smelling river nearby were under way. The zoning restrictions were less exacting than they were in the city center, so it would be possible to build much higher. Pan was also betting on a policy breakthrough: so far, the government had not permitted personal mortgages on housing, but he figured that it would do so within a few years, by which time construction would be finished. Personal bank loans meant that more people would be able to afford his upscale apartments. In short, instinct told him that location and timing, the two crucial factors in real estate, were both on their side.

At that time, most Chinese developers were chasing quick money, and a project was often bought and sold many times before a single brick was laid. Contemptuous of this trend, Zhang intended to go international: she wanted to attract major foreign investors and build something grand, like Hong Kong's Pacific Place. Pan was skeptical: he thought that would involve too many moving pieces and too much time. But he gave in, trusting his wife's expertise in raising foreign capital. So Zhang set to work, turning down small investors in order to focus on major backers. After nearly two years of negotiations, GIC, a Singapore government company that manages the country's foreign reserves, finally agreed to bankroll the project.

Then, in July of 1997, the Asian financial crisis struck, and the deal was suspended. Pan was furious, telling Zhang that if they had worked with small investors they would have finished building long ago. Zhang packed her suitcase and flew West to see her old friends. Pan went to Japan to cool down. Both assumed the marriage was over.

In England, Zhang stayed at a friend's country house. Despite the beauty and tranquillity of the place—trees, horses, a pond—she felt restless: life in the West had lost its allure. If she didn't return to China now, she decided, she never would. And if she was to be with Pan they had to figure out another way to work together.

She called him, and they had a long talk. "I will step down," she offered. "You do it yourself." And, she said, she wanted to have a child. This was, Zhang says, the most "rational" decision she had ever made in her life. "It was as though I gave myself a hard shove on the back."

She returned to Beijing and was soon pregnant, with the first of her two sons. Pan took full command of the business. Working with small investors, he signed up contracts building by building. Meanwhile, the couple commissioned Yung Ho Chang, the architect who would later design the packed-earth house for the Commune by the Great Wall, to build a country house for them on the city's outskirts.

Zhang shuttled back and forth to supervise the work being done on the house, meeting and talking regularly with Chang. For him, architecture was the family business; his father had designed the National Museum of Revolutionary History, on Tiananmen Square. But the son was American-trained, and had an eclectic, postmodern sensibility, with particular emphasis on the cultural dimensions of architecture. Stimulated by their conversations, Zhang delved into piles of architecture books.

"It was like taking a seminar," Zhang told me. And she was delighted with the house, which she and Pan decided to call Mountain Whispers: tall steel columns, stone walls, large windows—cavernous yet flooded with light. It was to be the family's weekend retreat. Her experience with Chang also awakened her to the possibilities of architecture. She looked back at all the buildings she had seen in Hong Kong, Europe, and America; Hong Kong, a city of dense population and high-rise apartment towers, was an especially useful reference: behind that ultramodern cityscape, every inch of space had been carefully calculated. Could this be achieved in Beijing?

Pan Shiyi was too smart a businessman not to make full use of Zhang. So, before the SOHO New Town construction began, he worked out a division of labor: he took charge of financial affairs (contract negotiations, fund-raising, sales, government relations), and she would handle decisions on architectural design, project management, and foreign relations. This time, Zhang proved to be well suited to the job. "She is moody, romantic, but a very shrewd businesswoman," Hung Huang, a *hai gui* friend of Zhang's and the publisher of several trendy Beijing life-style magazines, said. "It's a potent combination."

For SOHO New Town, Zhang sought out young local designers and urged them to be bold. This resulted in a series of features for which the complex eventually became famous. The apartments had large living rooms, but small bedrooms and no balconies—the opposite of traditional Beijing apartments. They had floor-to-ceiling windows, which traditionalists considered unsafe, and fine-finish woodwork, rather than the usual unfinished "white box" surfaces. Instead of the traditional gray, the color scheme was vibrant; red, yellow, green, and purple were used on the façade of every tower. At the same time, there were no costly, showy materials like granite and stainless steel. Some apartments had sliding walls, so that they could easily be adapted as office spaces. The concept of "SOHO"—Small Office-Home Office—was adopted with an eye to the growing number of small private companies in Beijing.

And then, to give the place an "artistic" feel, Zhang commissioned Ai Weiwei, a conceptual artist and an eminence in Beijing's avant-garde circles, to organize a group installation on the grounds. Ai, who lived in New York City for years, had only recently moved back to Beijing. His reputation as an inveterate troublemaker would have scared off most developers, but Zhang gave him a budget and promised him total freedom. Ai didn't disappoint her. Right on schedule, more than a dozen witty, stylish, and very "modern" sculptures and installations were placed in various public areas inside the towers, helping to attract the young, affluent cosmopolitans Pan and Zhang were targeting.

Then, just before construction was completed and the sales campaign could be properly launched, Deng Zhiren, Pan's sales chief, went to work for another company. Soon, Deng was hiring away much of Hongshi's sales team, and badmouthing Pan publicly. Pan and Zhang rushed to prepare statements and called for press conferences before further damaging stories could be aired. But suddenly developers, journalists, and even people who had already bought apartments in SOHO New Town were criticizing the project: the high prices, the uncertain quality. One rival developer, Ren Zhiqiang, the president of the Beijing Huayuan Group, called the SOHO New Town project "junk houses that should be bombed." He went on television to complain that the SOHO design had received three points, a very low score, at the municipal-housing-committee review. "It barely passed it," Ren said indignantly. "But he gets a three-point product sold at a five-point price, and makes a ten-point impact."

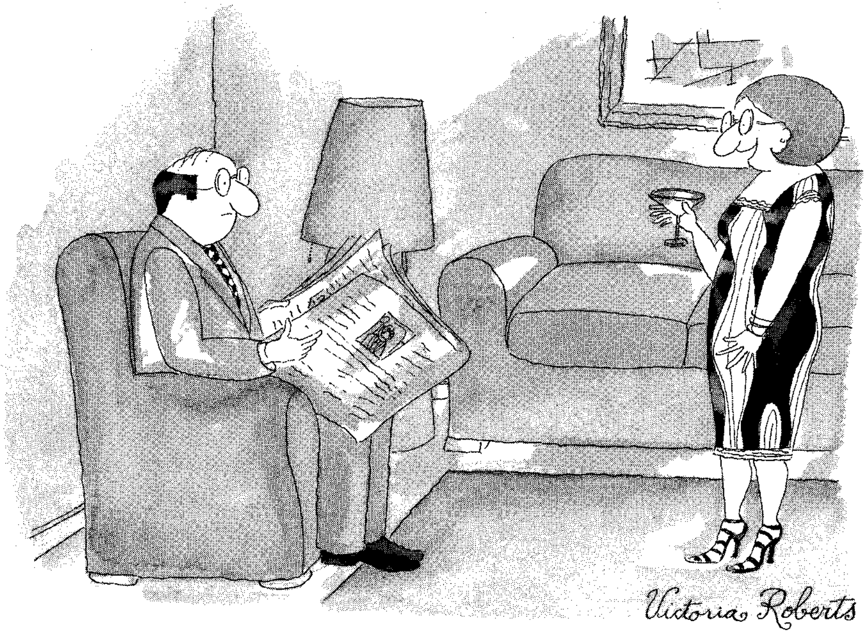
How to respond to the onslaught? "A hero would draw his sword and commit suicide," Pan said with a sly smile, and his next move certainly looked suicidal. In the midst of the crisis, an elegantly printed volume collecting all criticisms of Pan and the SOHO project arrived at Beijing's bookstands—published by Pan himself. The strategy worked: the more their opponents criticized their project, the more Pan and Zhang were able to defend and explain their ideas, and the more they talked to the press the more persuasive they seemed. Until now, nobody in the real-estate business had seemed as educated and knowledgeable, and certainly nobody was as media-friendly. No other housing project had ever enjoyed as much coverage.

"In this day and age," Pan said, "only a real person, a controversial person, can attract others' attention. Only then will people be concerned about you." Pan cited an American who was even more famous than Donald Trump as his inspiration: Bill Clinton. Clinton's media performance during the Monica Lewinksy scandal impressed him. "When he looked worn out, he still had to go to evening parties, face foreign reporters," Pan noted. "The pressure must have been huge!"

After a long, anxious wait, just as SOHO New Town was nearing completion, in late 1999, the mortgage bill was finally issued. In a way, this was a consequence of the Asian financial crisis, which convinced the Chinese government that it couldn't rely entirely on foreign capital and export, and that it was necessary to stimulate domestic consumer demand as well. At the sales office, people lined up through the night, and all two thousand units quickly sold. SOHO New Town became an instant landmark. Its modern, minimalist style established a trend, and Pan and Zhang became famous.

"It's an odd but telling phenomenon," a Hong Kong businessman now living in Beijing said to me. "In Hong Kong, business tycoons are the true celebrities. At a glamorous gathering, tycoons get front seats, while movie stars are a bit on the sidelines. But Beijing's celebrities are almost all movie stars and artists. Pan Shiyi and Zhang Xin are practically the only businesspeople." His explanation was simple. "Most super-rich people in mainland China cannot publicly explain their fortune," he said. "*Lai lu bu ming:* 'the origin is unclear.' They have to keep a low profile. How can a member of the 'princelings' "—the children of Party leaders—"preen in the media after using Daddy's influence to rake in millions? Or those who made it to the top through massive corruption and misuse of public funds? Pan Shiyi was poor, a nobody. Sure, they must have some connections, and you could question that first company loan in Hainan. But that's nothing on the corruption scale."

There's no doubt that corruption is endemic in the Chinese real-estate business. For example, until recently land sales weren't open—a bidder wasn't entitled to



"Shall I mark you absent or present today?"

know what anyone else had bid—and an underbidder could prevail by offering kickbacks to a few relevant officials. This past August, though, the government finally established new rules that call for open auctions in Beijing. "With the open-auction law, the government is saying to developers, 'You have made a lot of money from nothing, now you must buy land with real money and compete with others, including foreign companies,'" said Keith Abell, the vice-chairman and co-founder of GSC Partners, an investment firm based in New York. Abell has been visiting China regularly since 1979; he also happened to be Zhang's boss at Travelers Group. Ten years ago, when a big American developer came to him wanting to go to China, Abell advised against it: "I told him, 'You are not ready to do the things you must do to build in China—you aren't some guy from Hunan.'" But, he said, the situation in China has improved a lot in the past ten years. Others in Beijing real estate are skeptical that the open-auction system will end corruption. Counter-strategies, they pointed out, are already being devised. "Instead of buying the land," one of them explained, "a developer could just buy the factory or the company that's using the land. That way, they could bypass the open auction and cut deals among themselves."

In the real-estate community, Pan and Zhang are widely admired, but not because people think they've entirely escaped the usual mire of Chinese land transactions. How can anyone emerge from the mud completely clean? Now that Pan and Zhang are part of the establishment, though, they're intent on rehabilitating the image of their profession, and, besides, well-funded businesses like theirs stand to benefit from greater transparency and clearer regulation. In both 2002 and 2003, SOHO China ranked first in individual project sales among Chinese real-estate companies; last year it paid more taxes than any other real-estate company. The firm also bought the first piece of openly auctioned land within Beijing's Central Business District, where it is currently building another project, called SOHO Shang Du: a hundred-and-seventy-thousand-square-metre office and shopping complex. SOHO Shang Du is also Pan and Zhang's most architecturally ambitious development. Designed by the Australian Peter Davidson in a style that has been described as "fractal geometry," its two main towers will rise like iceberg shards. In January, the image-conscious couple hosted a tsunami-relief fund-raiser on the Shang Du site, jointly organized by the International Red Cross, and donated a million yuan that day. Other developers later followed their lead.

Hung Huang, the magazine publisher, sounds almost rapturous when she speaks about China's first generation of self-made millionaires. (According to a recent survey, she told me, there are more millionaires in China now than there are in France.) "China has produced thousands of Horatio Alger stories," she said. "Look at Pan Shiyi and Zhang Xin: a peasant's son, a girl who used to work in a Hong Kong sweatshop. I just love it! Pan Shiyi is the Donald Trump of China. This kind of success story was unthinkable ten years ago."

Not everyone shares this sunny perspective. A Hong Kong-based scholar and critic who writes on architecture and urban culture charges Zhang Xin and Pan Shiyi with being the self-satisfied creators of a new kitsch; in his view, the life styles and buildings they promote are nothing but superficial, sterile trend-mongering. "This could be dangerous if people start thinking that's real culture," he said. Pan and Zhang have also been condemned for making the basic necessity of shelter increasingly unaffordable. "Aren't they responsible for Beijing's absurdly high housing prices?" the critic asked.

Certainly when Pan's former Vantone partners described him as a "real-estate genius" and "the most successful private developer in Beijing," they were referring not to the quality of his buildings but to his knack for selling them at such high prices. In interviews, Pan has been happy to talk about how he had been the only person at the company sales meeting to insist on setting a high price for the Vantone New World Plaza. "They all stared at me as if I was a madman," he has said. But he got his way, and, in the end, he recalled, the profits were so huge that at a company gathering afterward "the men's eyes were all glazed, as if they were drunk."

Pan once said, "A businessman should be greedy by nature, but he must also be rational." He has, it would appear, been at once greedier and more rational than his colleagues. That's probably why he has consistently focussed on upmarket construction: it's more lucrative, as well as more glamorous. (He talked about waiting for the government to open up the secondhand-housing market, and he had a vision of a social pyramid: the rich would buy his upscale homes and sell their old homes to those who are less well off.)

"He's someone who can change himself swiftly in a new environment," Feng Lun, Vantone's chairman, said. Similar things might be said of Zhang. But it's

À REBOURS

My dreams are cubbyholes, lost in shadows,
and yet stuffed with the works of art I'll call my poems,
scraps of paper on which I'll scribble down,

far away from home, the saga
of a late voyage, or a journey, maybe, afoot at noon,
in search of gold, or snatches of the one true cross,

or pieces of a hangman's rope—anything at all, you'll see,
to end the waste at dawn, as I'll drift apart
from all I never found, or all that could never find me . . .

Then a pirate hid in Old Shanghai,
a guitar player in Mexico, or a swimmer
off Antarctica—friend or foe, or neither,

and all of these as the habitués of my soul—
the explorers of a vast riddle,

or pallbearers to the moon . . .

All in all, though yet not of me, all in quest,
though a quest not yet taken, if every tomorrow
is taken, both on faith, and then in fear,

with one year less, and one more still to come.
Only whatever is more is also less, I think, now we'll
use up, again and again, our hour on earth . . .

For at twilight each voyage is, in fact, our requiem,
the same as dreams are cubbyholes
in which are stuffed, over and over, our seasons

of poems and prayers, as a key may turn in a lock,
a step on a stair, till one fine morning we'll meet ourselves
deep in the roaring dark, and face our graves at last.

—*Robert Mazzocco*

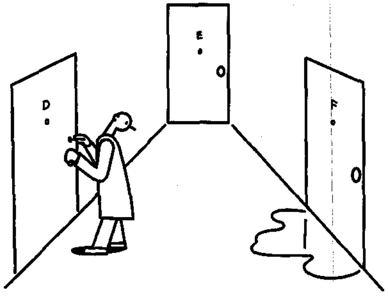
also plain that she's the one who has had to change more in order to thrive in China, and this reflects a common pattern in the relations between the cosmopolitans and the locals—between, in turtle terms, the *hai gui* and the *tu bie.* Though well trained, confident, and in demand, *hai gui* usually go through a period of readjustment, because the foreign ideas and manners they picked up from years of living abroad often create tension with the settled Chinese way of doing things. As one of my *hai gui* friends put it, "*Hai gui* will bring in some new ideas, new concepts, but *tu bie* know the rules of the game, and they know how to make it happen, or not happen."

Still, without Zhang I wonder if it would be possible to distinguish Pan's buildings from those of other developers, like Feng Lun. "In the tide of globalization, it's hopeless to stress a particular regional character," Zhang said to me in one of our conversations. "But I feel that we should at least stop for a minute and think about our own contemporary character, our modern identity. All past dynasties left something special in Beijing: the Great Wall, the Summer Palace. We are so eager to build our big cities, but ten years from now we might be shocked by what we build and it'll be too late. What we are doing in Beijing is an effort to leave something that we won't be ashamed of."

By now, Pan and Zhang represent both the advantages of a *tu bie–hai gui* partnership and the difficulties. They have two sons, ages six and four, named Rang and Shao, or Concession and Less. The names were Pan's idea: these are ancient virtues in Taoism. Yet there are subtle signs of tension. On an evening when I was to have dinner with Zhang, Pan sauntered into her office while we were talking there—his office is at the opposite end of the SOHO tower. We all stood chatting together for a while. Before leaving, Pan said, in a jesting tone, "So, nothing to do with me this evening?"

"Go off," Zhang replied dryly. "Don't think you are so important!"

But he showed up anyway, while we were in their SOHO New Town apartment. "We keep a home for ourselves in every place we build," Zhang told me. The apartment is a duplex, spacious and comfortable, furnished with Ikea-style furniture, track lights, and plants—a typical yuppie home. And dinner was simple: porridge, stuffed pork naans, a couple of pickled dishes, a green leafy vegetable. The three of us chatted for a while, and I brought up the subject of *hai gui.* "You know," Pan said, half teasing, "if you write only about *hai gui*, you'll hurt us *tu bies'* feelings."



Later that evening, I asked Zhang if she had had to make many "accommodations" when she returned to China.

"Yes," she said. "As a matter of fact, for a very long time I was basically shedding the baggage I carried back from abroad. I had to de-educate myself."

She admitted that moving back changed her from a romantic to "a market advocate." But the arrogant new rich in China, she said, made her wonder about her own role. Has her work helped make people more civilized, or just more materialistic? She once wanted to be an intellectual, someone with a sense of social responsibility. But now she is viewed as a rich person, and in China today the rich are assumed to be devoid of social ethics or public spirit.

It was midnight. We had been sitting at a long glass table out on the deck, a large walled-in terrace garden that Zhang calls her "courtyard in the sky." The apartment was dark inside. The boys had gone to bed hours ago. Pan was nowhere to be seen. The night had grown chilly.

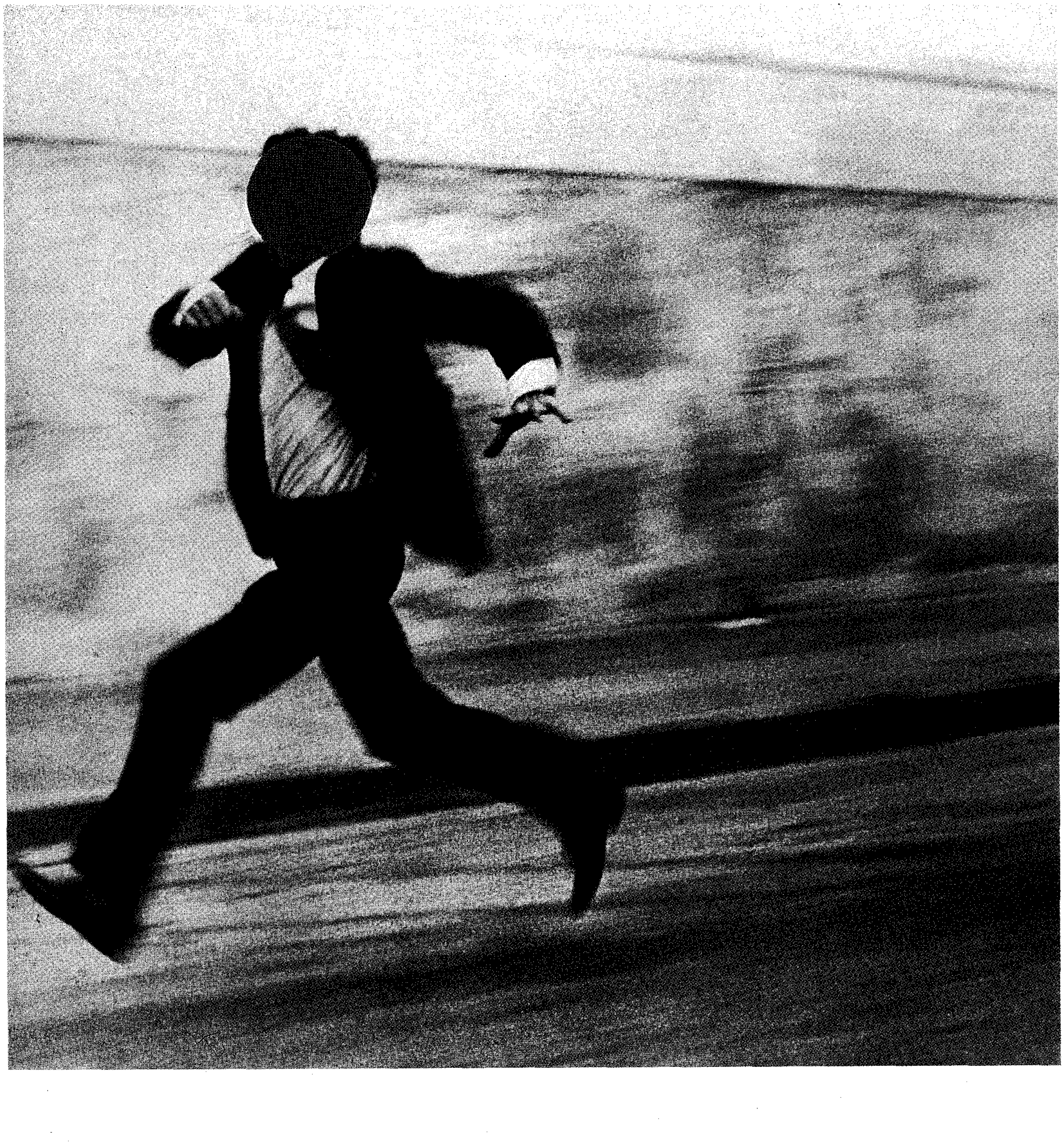
I brought up the issue of land sales, the pervasiveness of corruption, of "gray areas" in Chinese business and life. I asked her how she felt about all this, having lived in the West for years.

"Each side has its own ways," she said carefully. "Westerners have a simplistic understanding of China: whatever can't be clarified must be *guanxi.* The West doesn't understand that government in China is not as lean and efficient as it is in the West. There are too many governmental bodies: city, county, township, even a neighborhood is a government. It's all a messy tangle. Many things in China are vague. Some of our clients walk in and buy a dozen apartments in one shot. You don't know where they got the money. You just know some Chinese have a lot of it. It's a waste of time to try to clarify everything. I used to argue with Pan about it, because by nature I have a very low level of tolerance for vagueness. I'm not one who can fish in murky water. Pan is totally comfortable with murkiness. That's his normal state. And I've learned to tolerate it." ♦

FICTION

LONG-DISTANCE CLIENT

BY ALLEGRA GOODMAN



He was at work when it began. "We offer a choice of two plans," Mel told the new programmer on the phone. On the desk, his computer beamed at him, along with Sam and Annie, in their school pictures, his grown son and daughter fixed in first- and third-grade amber. The office was relatively quiet, the open-plan space still cavernous, although Mel was drawing up contracts and issuing I.D.s as fast as he could.

A couple of programmers were batting birdies around with badminton racquets, and Mel was finishing the routine medical-benefits conversation when he glanced up from his cubicle to see an electrician grinning at him from a square hole in the ceiling where he'd popped out the acoustic tile.

"Yoo-hoo," the electrician said.

Mel bristled. Carpenters didn't bother him, nor did the badminton or the unpacking. He almost enjoyed the drag and pop of box cutters slicing cardboard, the long rips crisp and promising, like autumn and fresh school supplies. Still, he was stodgy, the oldest employee at ISIS. He was the entire human-resources department, and he couldn't conduct business with electricians wisecracking from above.

"You can't go wrong—they're both terrific," he explained to the new hire, as he gestured at the cable-dangling electrician to disappear. "And we do offer dental." He stood up, pulling the receiver with him, but the cord wasn't long enough and his phone slid off the desk. Too quickly, he turned to scoop it up. A prickle, not unlike an electric shock, raked the left side of his back, an agonizing spasm and a wave of panic.

"Hey, what's wrong, Millstein?" Mel's twenty-seven-year-old boss, Jonathan, sidled up carrying a cardboard carton a few minutes later. "You look bad."

"Muscle spasm," Mel gasped. "I'm just trying to walk it off."

"Oh, is that all. I thought somebody died. Have some chips." Jonathan reached into the carton and pulled out a small bag. "We finally got salt-and-vinegar." He tossed Mel the packet.

Mel tried, but it hurt too much to lift his arm. The bag fell at his feet.

Jonathan stared for a moment, almost affronted. Then he laughed. "Here." He steered Mel toward a hammock strung up on a stand near the bank of windows. "Lie down and chill." With the cheerful force he employed in all his dealings, he flipped Mel into the net and sauntered off to the seminar room for a meeting.

"How will I get out?" Mel called. The question was not rhetorical.

Mel had been working for Internet Security Intelligence Systems since its earliest days, six weeks before. He had been an administrative assistant at the university when Jonathan and Aldwin and Orion and Jake incorporated and hired him away. They had just won a competition for their business plan, and were beating off scores of venture capitalists who flocked and flapped and circled back again with more and more money.

"Work for us a year and see how you like it," Jonathan had told Mel. "We're all students here. You know us already—you see us in the department every day. We'll pay you more."

"More than what?" Mel had asked. Caution was his intent, but he cringed at his own question; suddenly he sounded conniving and greedy.

Jonathan welcomed this thinking, however, and chuckled appreciatively. "More," he said. "More than whatever you make now. But that's not really the point."

"The point being?" Mel tried to chuckle, too.

"Here's the thing," Jonathan said, and he wasn't laughing at all. Laughing was already out of date. "We're going to be gazillionaires."

Now, flat on his back in the hammock, staring out at the white February sky, Mel knew ISIS to be as divinely productive as the winged Egyptian goddess from whom the company took its name. The company had already doubled in size and signed its first major contracts. Jonathan flew almost weekly on secret missions to L.A. and Atlanta, where the first ISIS cryptographic solutions were being beta tested. Back in Cambridge, Aldwin auditioned the vulture capitalists, probing their financial and intellectual resources. Those investors who could grasp the rudiments of the ISIS model advanced to further talks with Jonathan; those who could not were summarily rejected. Mel watched in awe as Jonathan brushed off seasoned businessmen twice his age. Just the other morning, Mel had arrived to find four columns of V.C.s' names scribbled on the office whiteboard under the headings Bozos, Morons, Losers, Sharks. It was 1999.

If he lay perfectly still, he felt no pain, but the moment he shifted his weight his muscles seized up again. "Ow, ow, ow," he moaned, and fell back into the hammock. A birdie drifted overhead and caught in the netting near his feet, and then Orion and Jake were gazing at him where he lay tangled in the hammock's web: gray slacks, button-down shirt, lace-up shoes, and spectacles, trussed up as if by a giant spider.

"Sorry. Were you sleeping?" Orion asked.

"I think I've thrown my back out," Mel told them.

"Bummer," Jake said. "How'd you do that?"

"I . . . my telephone . . ."

They were tall, lanky programmers. From this angle, their arms looked extraordinarily long. He could see the stubble under their chins. Orion wore his blond hair in a ponytail. Jake's mop fell into his eyes. The two of them seemed to play all day and work all night. They were like wild horses.

"Your telephone attacked you, huh?"

"Never mind. Help me out."

Gingerly, he sat up in bed the next morning, pivoted, placed his feet on the floor, and stood. He felt somewhat better, but he couldn't turn without pain. He could move only robotically, in straight planes and lines. "Barbara," he called to his wife, but she remained absorbed in her prayer book by the window. She was blue-eyed, fair, and soft-featured, easily bruised, a nurse by training, though she hadn't practiced for twenty years. She'd given up her job to devote herself to the children, who were not overcome with gratitude and had been urging her for years to go back to work, or at least to volunteer somewhere. "You should get a life, Mom," Annie had suggested at Thanksgiving.

Barbara took umbrage at this. "I *have* a life, thank you very much," she snapped, and plunged a serving spoon deep into the cranberry sauce.

"Nice," Sam whispered sarcastically

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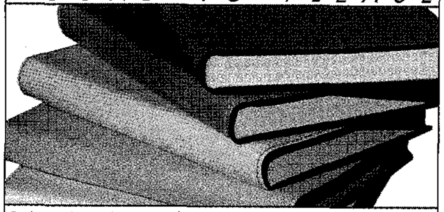

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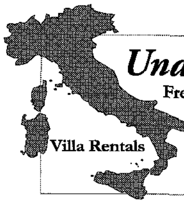

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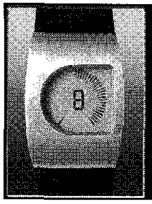

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to his sister. Of course, the kids had no idea what kind of life their mother was getting herself into.

"Good morning," Mel called out.

Barbara lifted one finger and kept praying, swaying slightly in her nightgown and quilted slippers.

He sighed, inched his way into the bathroom, showered, dressed, and went down to the kitchen, where he poured himself a lonely bowl of cereal. God had entered the house. Stealthily at first, modestly and quietly, God had crept inside Mel's split-level. He'd smuggled Himself in inside a loaf of challah. He'd stowed away in the pages of Barbara's black prayer book, and staked out every doorway in the mezuzahs Barbara had nailed up, each containing a little Hebrew scroll proclaiming His name. Mel darted a look at the mezuzah on the doorframe of the kitchen; it was ceramic, and painted in naïve Middle Eastern fashion with a blue five-fingered hand. The hand itself was decorated with a dark, almost Egyptian-looking eye, which gazed down upon Mel balefully.

Stiff and slow, Mel eased himself into his coat. "Goodbye," he called. He listened for a moment. "I'm heading out."

Then, just as he stepped into the frigid garage to drive to the station, he sensed Barbara coming up behind him, book and reading glasses in hand, still silent so as not to interrupt her prayers, but blowing kisses all the same.

He lived in Canaan, almost halfway between Boston and Providence, on Fuller Circle, a small road linking Emerson and Thoreau Streets. The street names lent a literary air to the modest Capes and white ranch houses in the neighborhood, although the only Transcendentalists who had ever taken up residence in the town were the Bialystoker Hasidim, who had set up house on Alcott. These Bialystokers, Rabbi Zylberfenig and his wife and children, had been sent as emissaries from Brooklyn to return the unaffiliated Jews of Canaan to Judaism.

Mel shuddered as he drove past the Bialystokers' low-slung, neatly painted gray ranch. He was a fair-minded man, unprejudiced and respectful toward minorities. He had drafted his company's declaration: "ISIS is an equal-opportunity employer. Applicants will receive appropriate consideration regardless of race, color, creed, age, gender, sexual orientation, or country of origin." Those were his words, and he lived by them. Still, when he saw the little Zylberfenig boys running across the slushy front yard, and screaming in Yiddish, their hair long and curling under black velvet yarmulkes as big as soup bowls, their white shirts untucked and fringes flying, he felt only revulsion and embarrassment, mounting anxiety for his neighborhood, his home, and especially his wife. When it came to these fringe members of his own faith, Mel could not remain calm and rational; he could not respect differences, but sped past, silently screaming.

The office was in an uproar when he arrived. Orion had crashed ISIS 2.0 just hours before deployment. Screen after screen of code flashed before Jake and Orion as they leaned in, debugging furiously. Aldwin was closeted with yet another pair of potential investors, but Jonathan paced, taut and angry, firing off suggestions.

"What you should have done—" he said.

"Hey, stop back-seat programming," Orion protested.

"Stop fucking with my code," Jonathan snarled.

"You said test the system."

"Yeah, not break the system."

"Well, I guess the system failed the test."

"Could you guys just shut up?" Jake pleaded.

There was not a badminton racquet in sight; the other programmers were typing madly in their cubicles, all hands on deck except for a couple of new hires, who were standing by uncertainly.

"You should have listened to me the first time," Jonathan told Orion.

"No, you should have listened to me when I said it wasn't ready," Orion retorted.

"Make it ready." Jonathan's voice was deadly quiet.

"Welcome," Mel told the new kids, with perhaps more cheer than the situation warranted. He ushered them to his cubicle for paperwork and laminated clip-on I.D.s, ISIS fleece vests, and baseball caps. "We'll get you started on some new machines. And you'll need desks."

By lunchtime, Jake had found the

bug. Aldwin had got rid of the investors, Jonathan was on the phone stalling sys. admins. in Atlanta, Sunnyvale, and L.A., while the work of patching and mending the broken code began. The programmers were frantic, but no longer desperate. Mel circuited the office slowly, trying to walk off the pain that was escalating up his side.

"Let me give you the number of my Alexander teacher," said Danica, the company secretary, from her perch atop a giant exercise ball. "I swear, this guy saved my life when I hurt my hip last year."

"What did he do to you?" Mel asked.

"Nothing," Danica said, bouncing slightly. She was twenty-three, a modern dancer. "That was the most amazing thing about it. He barely even touched me."

"Why don't you just go see a doctor?" Annie asked when he and Barbara called that weekend.

"I did," Mel said. "He gave me muscle relaxants, and they knocked me out."

"O.K.," she said, and he could picture his little girl, the psych major, rolling her eyes. "So why don't you get acupuncture?"

"Acupuncture!"

Barbara chided Annie gently from the phone in the bedroom. "Your father does not like needles."

"Oh, yeah," she said, her voice wondering as she remembered this arcane fact from the distant past.

"Why don't you get some exercise?" Sam asked when they finally reached him at Amherst. "That's probably all it is. You're sitting around all the time."

"He could walk to the station," Barbara mused. She had a way of talking about him in the third person to the kids, even when he was there.

He was exhausted, but he could not sleep. His back seized up as soon as he lay down. It throbbed as he sat at his desk, and he ended up standing on the train home. He was not in such terrible shape, not at all the couch potato his son supposed. He was a few pounds overweight, but nothing to deserve this.

"I think," Barbara ventured cautiously as they ate dinner at the end of the week, "you might want to talk to Rabbi Zylberfenig."

"Zylberfenig! Because he knows so much about back pain?"

"He gives good advice," Barbara said.

Mel looked at her across the white tablecloth. Flickering candles, two loaves of challah, goblets of red wine, a pot roast, and a potato kugel stood between him and his wife. "How old is Rabbi Zylberfenig?" he demanded.

"He's got seven children."

"And what's that supposed to mean?"

"He's older than we were at his age."

"Barbara, I don't know what's wrong with you," he burst out. "You're obsessed with these people. It's a cult. The Bialystokers are taking over your life." He eased himself to his feet and began to clear the table.

"They help me," she said. Then, in a small voice, "You know I've always hated my name."

He looked at her uneasily, unsure where this was going.

"Did you know Barbara means 'barbarian'?"

"No," he said, "I don't think that's right. That can't be true."

"I'd prefer to go by my Hebrew name," she said, nervous but steadfast. "I'd like to be called Basha. Could you just . . . think about it?"

"No! I can't think about it—"

"I realize you don't like change," she said.

"Why do you say that? I don't like it because it's not your name. That's not you—that is not the woman I married."

"I'm not a barbarian," she said.

He took tiny steps. Holding still, he bore his backache like a hundred-pound weight; one false move and an iron grip took his breath away.

He went in for tests; he tried sleeping on the floor; he purchased a new pillow for his bed and carried a special foam wedge cushion with him on the train. He looked as though he had two black eyes, he was so bruised and swollen from his attempts to sleep. One morning, he dragged himself into the office with his dripping umbrella, and Danica said, "All right, I'm calling and making an appointment for you."

"What, with this Alexander person? No, I didn't like the sound of that."

"I'm sorry, I can't stand looking at you anymore," Danica said, dialling. "Can you make it at 8 A.M. Tuesday?"

"No, I can't," Mel spluttered. "I'd have to take the early train."

"So?" Danica shot back.

THE NEW YORKER, NOV. 12, 1927
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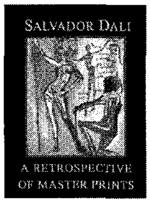

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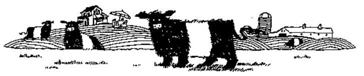

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And she was right. What did it matter when he left in the morning? He was up all night anyway.

Bobby Bruce, Alexander Instructor, practiced above New Words in Inman Square. He did not provide directions to his office but allowed his patients to wander around the back of the brown shingled bookstore and up the wooden wheelchair ramp to a rear door unmarked except for the admonition "Push Hard" on a card taped next to the buzzer.

The stairs inside were steep, gray-carpeted, and creaky. At the top, Mel pushed open a glass door and entered a waiting room with a wood-grain coffee table, a Poland Spring water dispenser, and a futon covered with a midnight-blue print with gold stars and moons. There was not a single magazine to read, and there was no way Mel was sitting on the futon.

"Hi." Bobby had been standing in the doorway to the examining room, studying Mel the whole time.

"Hello. Good morning," Mel replied. He took off his gray wool coat. "How are you?"

Bobby said nothing. He was tall, gaunt, and shaggy-haired, like a starving wolf, and he wore an untucked striped shirt and washed-out jeans. He didn't seem to notice the coat in Mel's hands. Mel propped it stiffly on the futon.

Several shelves' worth of color-coded manila folders filled the examining room, and Mel was surprised and grateful to see that he was not Bobby's only patient. There was a long table covered with white paper, as in a doctor's office, but Bobby did not ask Mel to sit down. There was also a gray metal desk and a folding chair. A large white combination blotter/calendar lay on the desk, along with a black rotary telephone and two photographs, one of a snowy mountain and one of a middle-aged woman with brown hair hanging down in braids on either side of her face.

"Is there any paperwork you'd like me to fill out?"

"No," Bobby said. He opened a desk drawer and extracted a new manila folder, then pulled and pulled and finally yanked open the top drawer of the desk to reveal a grubby pencil, three paper clips, and one marble rolling around. He took out the pencil and wrote Mel's name on the folder. Mel's eyes widened. He had never seen anyone write so slowly or use such a miserable stub of a pencil without giving up and searching for a pen, a computer, a typewriter. For this he'd taken the early train?

"All right." Empty-handed, Bobby stood before Mel.

"Well, what would you like me to do?" Mel asked. "Would you like to see the range of motion I've got? Should I explain how I injured myself?"

Bobby shook his head.

"I figured you'd want to know when the pain started."

"No," Bobby admitted. "Not particularly."

"What, then?" Mel demanded.

"Why don't you turn toward me," Bobby said mildly, "and we'll see if we can make some adjustments."

"I am standing up and facing you," Mel snapped.

"Turn and face me," Bobby said.

"I don't understand," said Mel. He was looking Bobby squarely in the face, or, rather, looking up slightly, since Mel was on the short side and Bobby was so tall.

"No, you're not quite centered," Bobby said, and he touched Mel's right shoulder with his long fingertips. His touch was as light and diffident as his voice, but he pushed Mel ever so slightly. He touched Mel's chin, then almost imperceptibly turned Mel's head. He reached around to run his fingers up Mel's spine and again touched Mel's right shoulder. "There you go."

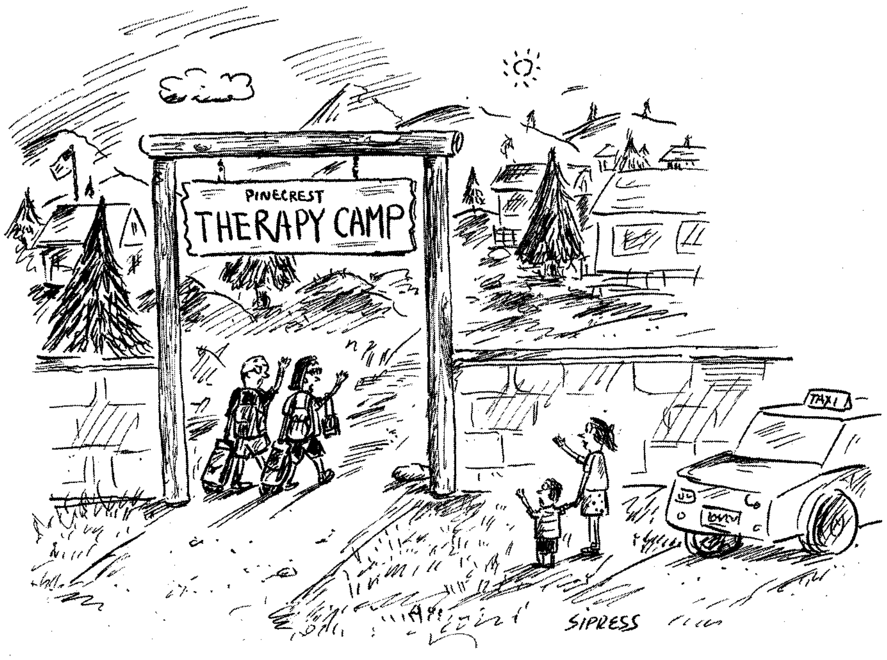
"I feel like I'm leaning to the right now," Mel said petulantly.

"No," Bobby told him, "you're straight now."

"I'm definitely leaning to the right."

Bobby nodded. "You'll feel that way for a while, but the reason is, in fact, you've been walking around all this time leaning about two inches to the left." He looked into Mel's eyes and suddenly, in spite of himself, Mel realized the truth of this. He had been leaning. His entire body had been out of kilter, and now he was back at center. Suddenly, he realized from the enormity of its absence that he was not in pain.

He couldn't analyze or explain Bobby's methods ("I know, I know," Danica said, "it's the bizarrest thing"), but they worked. After each Tuesday session, he glided down the stairs, his



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shoulders centered, his head poised, his entire body several inches taller than it had been when he arrived. He floated through the day as buoyant as a fresh helium balloon. If only Bobby's work had been permanent, he would have been entirely happy, but he could not help sinking a little the next day, and a little more the next, until, by the end of the week, he had fallen entirely into his former knotted state.

Monday mornings, the commute was hardest. He could feel the pressure building on his back. There were times he thought he might faint. He leaned against the window of the train.

"Would it be possible to switch to a Monday appointment?" he asked Bobby.

"No," Bobby said.

"You're completely booked?"

"I don't work Mondays," Bobby said.

"Yeah, but I do! And after the weekend I can barely move."

"Hmm."

He looked at Bobby hopefully. "Would you think about it?"

"Nope," Bobby said.

"You don't understand," Mel muttered.

He had awakened early Sunday morning to the sound of pots and pans clattering and a smell of gas. Rushing into the kitchen in his bathrobe, he'd discovered Rabbi Zylberfenig standing with a lit blowtorch next to the open oven.

Barbara was beaming. "We're kashering the kitchen."

"You're what? What did you say? I'm sorry?"

Barbara dumped a pile of silverware into a pot of boiling water on the stove. "I told you I'd be doing some cleaning."

"No. No. Cleaning is one thing. Torching my oven is something entirely different."

"I didn't think you'd mind," she said. "You don't cook," she added.

"It's O.K. It's all right." The Rabbi turned off the blowtorch and extended his hand to Mel. "It's quite understandable you're surprised the kitchen is turned upside down, but I assure you the food will be as good as ever. Maybe even improved!"

Mel backed away from the young bearded man in his black frock coat and white shirt, his black round-brimmed hat and his shiny black dress shoes. "Listen, I'm an agnostic, O.K.?" he blurted out. This was not so much a point of information as a desperate jab in self-defense on the threshold of his kitchen.

The Rabbi smiled. His eyes were round and the palest blue. "Agnostic! That's good—that's wonderful. You are full of questions, Mordechai. It's a wonderful place to start."

"Who's Mordechai?" Mel asked, bewildered. Then he realized that the Rabbi had called him by his Hebrew

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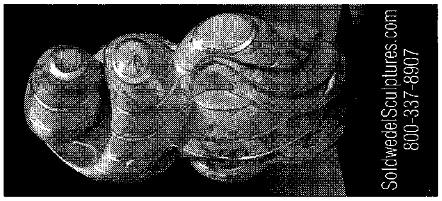
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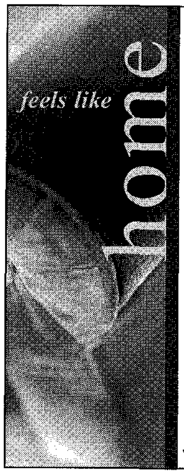

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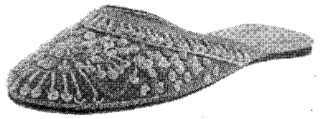

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name. A searing flame swept up his left side. Barbara must have told the Rabbi. He felt utterly exposed. Betrayed. His Hebrew name was like his parents' living room, a place no one entered except for weddings and funerals. His Hebrew name was his mother's white sofa; it was her silver tea set on the sideboard, garish and grandiose, mummified in plastic wrap, never tarnished and never used.

"My wife is turning into something frightening," Mel confided to Bobby now. "I barely recognize her anymore."

Bobby took this in with a sad smile. He touched Mel's shoulder with his long healing fingertips. Then, almost in the same moment, he was ushering Mel to the door. No matter how late Bobby began a session, he always ended on time. "I've got my eight-thirty," he said.

"Where?" Mel protested, gesturing at the empty waiting room. He'd never once seen anyone arrive at eight-thirty.

"It's a long-distance client," Bobby explained.

"Oh," Mel said, as if he understood. Only after he left did he begin to think Bobby was putting him off—or maybe just putting him on. Long-distance Alexander treatment? How did that work? How could Bobby possibly make adjustments over the phone?

He arrived at ISIS with that niggling discomfort—the confusion about Bobby's imaginary client—and as he headed down the hall Jonathan called out to him, "Hey, Millstein. We've got a new plan to get you some help. We're promoting Danica. She's going to be giving you a hand around here."

"Danica! What do you mean, giving me a hand?"

"With the hires, the recruitment, all the stuff you have to do. She can take the desk next to yours."

There was something so flippant in this, so ferociously casual, that Mel felt his teeth clench. "What are you saying?" he asked. "What do you propose for her new position?"

"Co-director, human resources. What's the problem?"

"Jonathan, this isn't usually the . . . Is she taking my job? Sharing it with me? Where does she fit in the chain of command?"

"Relax," Jonathan said. "You aren't losing your job or anything."

"Losing my job?" Mel echoed.

"Hey, cheer up. Stop whining." Jonathan's cell phone rang, and he examined the caller I.D. and smiled.

"Whining?" Mel repeated in disbelief as Jonathan hurried off.

Aldwin assured him afterward that Jonathan hadn't meant anything by this—that Jonathan had a unique way of talking, and that Mel was not being demoted. Far from it. Aldwin was Jonathan's opposite, smooth and conciliatory where his partner was rough. Mel had seen the two of them handle other people together.

All day he worked in a cloud. He tried to carry on as usual, but he could not. He was working with Danica now. He had to orient her and help her settle in, and he felt in his very spine that he was training his replacement. It was only Tuesday afternoon, and the pain was already rising again. He thought of it as *the* pain now, not his pain but a larger, impersonal force. The pain—the way opera singers speak of their instrument, the voice.

This was a mistake; this was all a mistake. He should never have left the university to work with these kids. All around him programmers were typing, juggling, bouncing rubber balls. They knew nothing, cared nothing. Why had he come here—apart from his trouble with his former boss, apart from the promises of stock, the chance of millions? He should leave, resign now, gather up the pictures on his desk and run away. One-handed, he phoned Bobby.

"Yeah," Bobby said.

"I think I've pulled something again," Mel told him in a low voice. "I'm all out of alignment."

"Mmm-hmm."

"Could I come back? Just for a few minutes?"

Bobby sighed.

"Yes?"

"I'm busy," Bobby said.

Mel stared at the phone. He had never known anyone demonstrably less busy.

"Besides," Bobby added laconically, "my wife is sick."

That spring, Jonathan and Aldwin chose their venture capitalists, and a C.E.O. as well. ISIS Mission Statements printed on royal-blue card stock appeared on all the walls.

They began: "1. Have fun. 2. Never ignore profit." Danica came to Mel constantly with questions and comments and little queries from new hires. He worked twice as hard, now that he was co-directing human resources with her. She gave him an exercise ball to match her own and insisted that if he jettisoned his swivel chair all his problems would be solved.

On his very first attempt to balance on the ball, Mel slid off and injured himself all over again. Head down, eyes smarting, he was pacing the diminished open space between cubicles when Bobby called to cancel that week's appointment.

"No!" Mel moaned. "You've got to understand, I'm in pain."

"Yeah, pain is no fun," Bobby said with his usual calm.

"Please. Is there any other day we can reschedule?"

"No can do. Jeannie's not feeling well."

"Which one is that?" He heard the sarcasm creeping into his voice, but he was hurting and he couldn't help himself. "Is Jeannie the long-distance client?"

Bobby's simple response chastened him. "She's my wife."

Bobby began to cancel regularly, with scarcely any notice. Sometimes he called Mel at home the night before. He had to take Jeannie to the herbalist or the hydrotherapist or the hypnotist. The excuses became more and more obscure. Once, he cancelled because Jeannie's viola was in the shop and he had to drive her down to the Cape to try out an instrument she was thinking of borrowing. Twice Bobby cancelled when Jeannie was playing with her all-women Seneca Falls Quartet. Bobby called and said, "I'm driving this week."

"What! Again?" Mel burst out. "Isn't there any other way she can get to the performance?"

"Oh, it's just a rehearsal," Bobby said.

"A rehearsal. And there is no one else to drive her?"

"Well, she could probably drive herself," Bobby mused.

"Please," Mel said, "I'm begging you. I'm begging her."

Bobby was quiet for a moment on the other end of the line. Then he said again, "She's just not feeling real well."

Mel pleaded, demanded, remonstrated. He even asked, "Are there exercises I could do at home? Are there books that I could read?"

"Nope," Bobby said. "No good ones."

"Aren't there any tips you could give me for the days you cancel?" he begged Bobby at one session.

"No tips," Bobby said, gazing at him steadily with his river-gray eyes. "Just be mindful. Be aware. There's nothing else you can really do."

"That's it? Are you telling me I'm going to have to live with pain for the rest of my life?"

"Maybe," Bobby said, so nonchalantly that Mel almost laughed.

"You have a terrible bedside manner," Mel said.

"You aren't in bed," Bobby said.

"Could you do me a favor? Could you at least give me the dates of Jeannie's rehearsals and performances, so I'll know what to expect?"

"O.K., sure," Bobby said. "You're welcome to come with us, too. The next one is in Northampton."

Mel stared at him. Sometimes he wondered if Bobby remembered why he was standing there in the office. Did Bobby seriously think that Mel was volunteering to crouch in the back of a car all the way out to western Mass., only to sit for two hours more in a church somewhere? "No, I don't think so." The words escaped him. He was thinking aloud.

"Well, the viola is actually very interesting," Bobby replied evenly, as if Mel had been arguing with him about music. "And that's because it's the inner voice. Jeannie says it's got the least ego of the Western instruments."

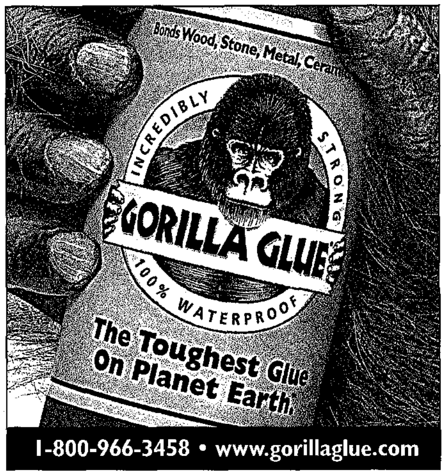
"O.K.," Mel said.

"It's gradualist, working from within." Bobby looked off into the air contemplatively, even as Mel stood before him, silent but impatient, desperate for relief.

"That's the political view," Bobby said. "The thing I like about the viola is you really have to listen."

That Friday, ISIS got its biggest contract to date. Yahoo! was adopting the ISIS system. Jonathan and Aldwin gathered all forty-two employees near the windows where the hammock had been, and the whole company whooped and cheered.

"This is your work," Aldwin said, pointing to the programmers.



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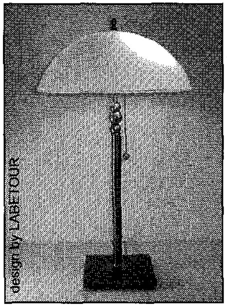

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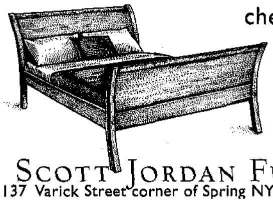

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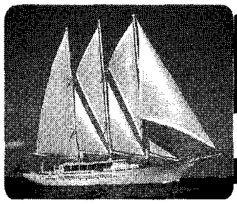

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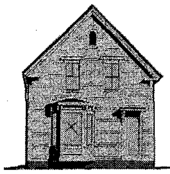

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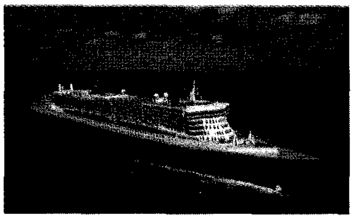

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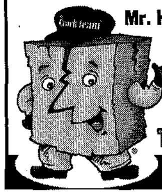

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"You guys are super," said the C.E.O., who spoke without obscenities and shaved and wore business apparel.

"You guys are *animals!*" Jonathan shouted, and raised his fist.

The programmers talked of convertibles and motorcycles. They debated which were fastest and which were overpriced—not that it mattered anymore! They spoke of vacations. A company camping trip in the High Sierra. No, a voyage down the River Nile, a cruise to see the Pyramids. It was a great day, and even as he stood, afraid to bend or turn, pinioned by pain, Mel felt proud.

He tried to tell Barbara what had happened as they sat in the den after dinner, she in the La-Z-Boy and he in a straight-backed chair with his special cushion wedged under him. "It's an amazing thing, watching an entire company come to life like this. We had four thousand square feet of empty space and now . . ."

Barbara looked up from "Tales of the Bialystoker Rebbes" and nodded. "Do you know what the fifth Bialystoker said?"

He sighed.

" 'Consider all the riches in the world, all its beauties and pleasures. How much greater is the Holy One Blessed Be He than these.' "

"Uh-huh," Mel said.

"But, wait, here's the other part. 'Consider all the suffering in the world, all its difficulties, poverty, and pain. How much greater is the Holy One Blessed Be He than these.' According to legend, the fifth Bialystoker heard this from birds in the forest."

"That was very perceptive of him," Mel said.

Disappointed, Barbara turned back to her book. "You don't have to be so ironic," she murmured.

You don't have to be such a raving Hasidic fanatic, he thought, but he didn't say it. Instead, he sat, silent and furious. A few minutes later all the lights in the den blacked out.

"Oh, I'm sorry," Barbara said. "I put them on timers so we wouldn't have to turn the lights off on Shabbat. I guess I set them too early."

In the dark, he sensed her waiting in her chair with her book in her lap. He felt confused and somehow trapped. Did she want him to turn the lights on for her? Or would she take offense if he did? She was sitting quite still, and he sat next to her. He wondered what good zillions would be for him and Barbara. What would they possibly spend them on—apart from a divorce?

That week, Bobby cancelled, and the next week as well. He said he had to take Jeannie in for treatment, but gave no further explanation.

"I wish you would come with me to services," Barbara told Mel on Saturday morning. Her eyes were full of dreamy concern.

"I wish I were a horse," Mel said.

Startled from her reverie, she turned to him with some alarm.

"Then I could sleep standing up."

"Oh," Barbara said, as if relieved, and laughed softly. "Do you remember when Annie wished she was a horse?"

"Of course I do," said Mel, although he had no recollection of this at all.

The phone on the kitchen wall rang.

"First, she wanted to ride horses, and then she wanted to have a horse . . ."

The phone rang again.

"And then she said she just wanted to *be* a horse."

Barbara had given up answering the phone on Saturdays. Mel picked up.

"Hey. It's Bobby."

"Oh," Mel said. "Listen, why don't you call on the weeks you *can* make it?"

"That's what I'm doing. I'm calling to confirm Tuesday." Bobby paused. "Jeannie's dead."

"Dead!"

"That's right."

Of course he'd known Jeannie was sick, but Bobby had never discussed the details, and Mel had assumed this was a long, wasting sort of disease, a multiyear type of battle—not something so quick. After all, Jeannie had been rehearsing all this time, and even performing. He realized with a pang that he would never hear her play. And he had been so offended by Bobby's breezy invitation. He remembered that actually he liked chamber music—in small doses. The melodic kind, in any case, with a romping race to the finish. He could have told Barbara about the Seneca Falls Quartet, and they might have driven out to Northampton together. Barbara had played the piano years ago. They could have visited Sam at Amherst. Panicked, his eyes darted from the kitchen clock to Barbara's round face to the mezuzah in the doorway, for he was mortified by his own thoughts, the laundry list and petty day-trip planner of his brain. Jeannie had died. And he'd been pressing Bobby all these weeks, anxious only about his own back. How insistently his ideas devolved upon himself. How whiny he had become—just as Jonathan had said. And he had always considered himself rather stoic, before he'd experienced chronic pain.

With some trepidation, he walked up Hampshire Street on Tuesday morning. He paused at the Flower Pot, where the window was painted "Floral Gifts for All Occasions . . . I Love You . . . Congratulations . . . Happy Birthday . . . Sympathy . . . Just Because." He hesitated, and then ventured in. Shyly, he gazed at the orchids and the potted azaleas, the black buckets of giant daisies and baby sunflowers.

"May I help you?" the saleslady asked.

In glass refrigerators, the long-stemmed roses stood apart, chilly and elegant, coral, blood-red, cream, and white.

"Just looking," he murmured, and slipped outside again.

Bobby was pale, his gaunt cheeks and gray hair ashen.

"I'm sorry," Mel said.

Bobby nodded.

"It's terrible," Mel blurted out.

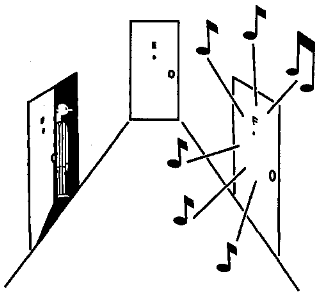
"Beyond measure," Bobby agreed, and reached out and squared Mel's shoulders.

He had lost almost all color, but he had not lost his touch. By the end of the session, Mel was standing straight again, his shoulders readjusted, his back aligned.

Mel lingered in the doorway. He wanted to say something, but he didn't know what. "Thanks a million," he said.

Bobby nodded. "I'd better go back." It was eight-thirty, exactly.

Mel dreaded walking down the stairs; he feared the pain he knew awaited him, the tightening, the loneliness, the misalignment. "Long-distance client?" he asked hopefully, conversationally.



"Yup." Bobby disappeared into the examining room, swinging the door behind him.

Mel strained his ears to hear a telephone or a radio or a computer's whir and beep, but he heard nothing. He stared at the crack between door and jamb. He knew he should go, but he couldn't leave. Who was this long-distance client? Some figment of Bobby's imagination? Someone who had moved away? A rich eccentric who kept Bobby on retainer just for thinking about him? Was it a disciple of some sort—a black-belt Alexander student who took treatment telepathically? The one time Bobby had dropped a hint, he'd suggested something of the sort. Mel had grumbled, "Well, given all these scheduling problems maybe you should start treating me long-distance, too."

Bobby had mulled this seriously. Then he said, "In your case, I don't think it would do much good."

"Oh, really?" Mel asked, sarcastic again.

"You're not on that level yet," Bobby explained. "It takes a lot of time."

"Yeah, I'll bet."

"At least fifteen years."

Still no noise. Mel strained his ears. All he heard was water in the building's pipes, a distant rumbling of trucks outside. What could Bobby hear in there? Was it Jeannie? Had it been Jeannie all this time? What frequency, what inner voice did Bobby find to guide him?

He crept up to the door and peeked inside. Curious, skeptical, anguished, he spied Bobby plucking a patient's file from the shelf. Bobby opened the manila folder on his desk and then, with great concentration, just as he did with Mel's file, he pencilled the date inside. With his back to Mel, he sat down in the metal folding chair at the desk and sighed, even as he gazed out into the middle distance between Jeannie and the snowy mountain. The scene was utterly serious, even though it made no sense. Bobby's manner was focussed, studious, entirely professional. He sat tall in his chair, head centered, shoulders at rest. And yet he wasn't at rest. He leaned forward, listening, even as Mel did, waiting, watching for something not yet visible. He considered the empty space in front of him, making adjustments of the subtlest kind. ♦

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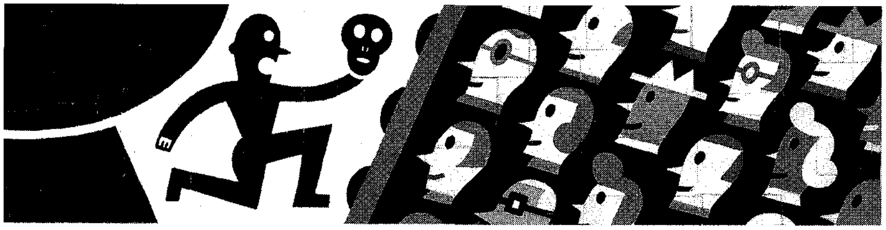
THE CRITICS



A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE CANDY MAN

Why children love Roald Dahl's stories—and many adults don't.

BY MARGARET TALBOT

Roald Dahl, the British author of children's books, wrote in a tiny cottage at the end of a trellised pathway canopied with twisting linden trees. He called it the "writing hut," and, since Dahl was nearly six feet six, he must have inhabited it like a giant in an elf's house. Dahl died in 1990, at the age of seventy-four, but one day a year his widow, Felicity, invites children to the estate where he lived, in Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire, and local families swarm in like guests at Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory. There are games—Splat the Rat and Guess the Number of Sweeties in the Jar—and tea, cakes, and orange squash for sale. An R.A.F. band plays in the shade of the house. This year, I attended myself. The appointed day was hot and bright, with a clear sky that Dahl would have described as "milky blue." The girls wore sherbet-colored canvas hats; the boys, their pale legs poking out of shorts, looked destined for sunburns. Many of the kids peered inside the writing hut—they weren't allowed in—and seemed to discover there further evidence that Dahl was a strangely sympathetic adult who shared a preoccupation with candy, a clinical fascination with the body, and a love of ingenious, self-devised schemes.

The adults who looked into the hut were less impressed. The walls, lined with Styrofoam, were stained sepia from all the cigarettes Dahl smoked; there was a grotty wing chair; and wires for a jury-rigged heating system dangled from the ceiling. "You'd expect it to be grander," one woman said. But the kids saw more possibilities in a musty old hut of one's own. They liked the fact that Dahl, unsatisfied with desks, had designed a baize-covered writing board, to balance on his lap just so. And they loved that he kept, on a side table, a jar containing gristly bits of his own spine, which had been removed during an operation on his lower back. Next to the jar was a waxy-looking knob that turned out to be Dahl's hip bone, along with a titanium replacement.

"It makes a good letter opener," one little boy said of the prosthetic hip.

"Has it got blood on it?" another asked hopefully.

Several young visitors asked for permission to hold the ball of chocolate-bar wrappers that Dahl had made as a young man; he scrunched a new one into the ball each day, after eating his habitual lunchtime treat. (Now hard and surprisingly heavy, the wad resembles a small cannonball.) Still, what seemed to excite the children the most was the paperback collection of Dahl's own work. "Look!" several of them cried. "There are the *books!*"

Dahl, whose first book for children, "The Gremlins," was published in 1943, and whose last, "The Minpins," was published posthumously, in 1991, has been astonishingly popular for nearly half a century. In a 2000 survey, British

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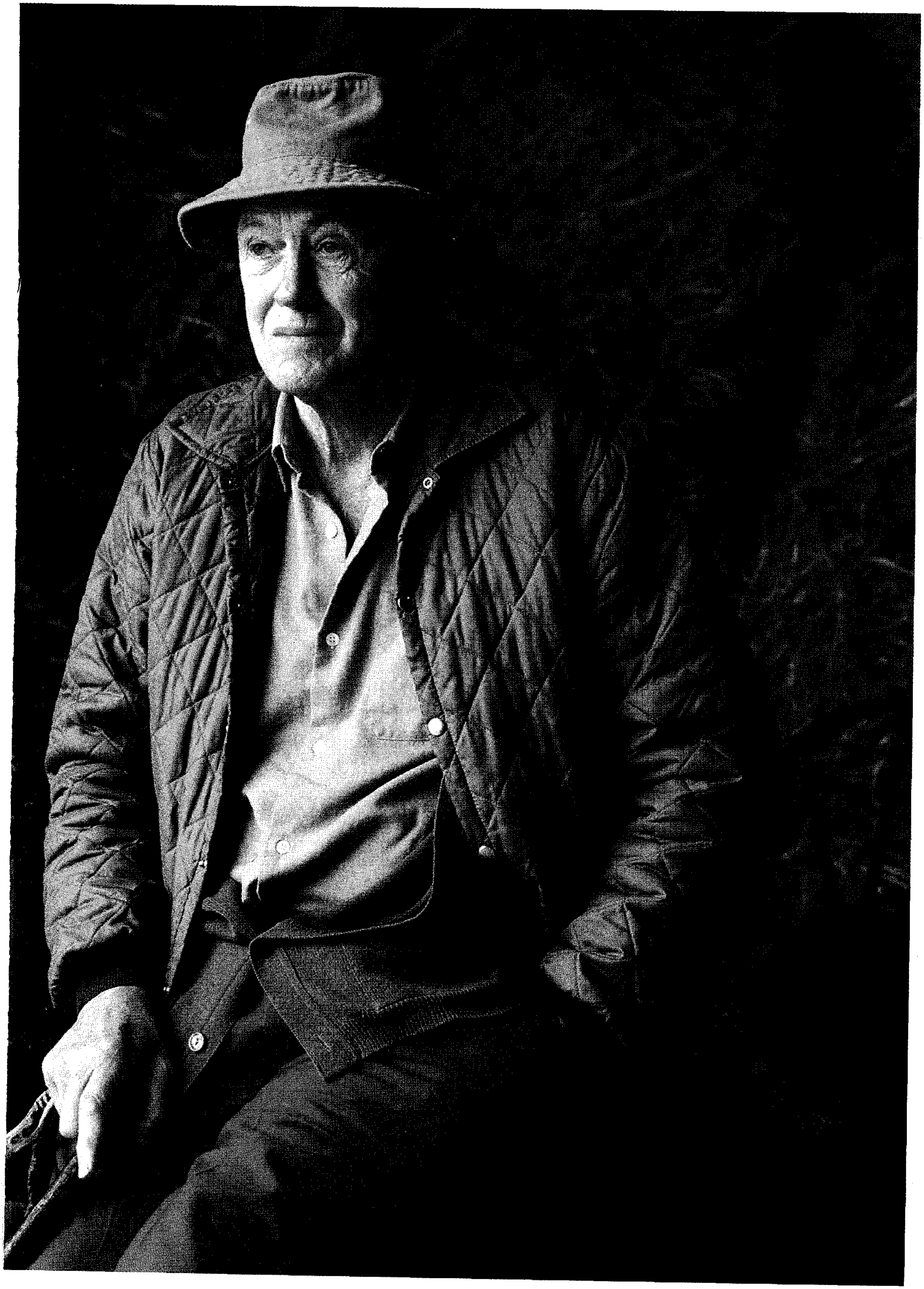
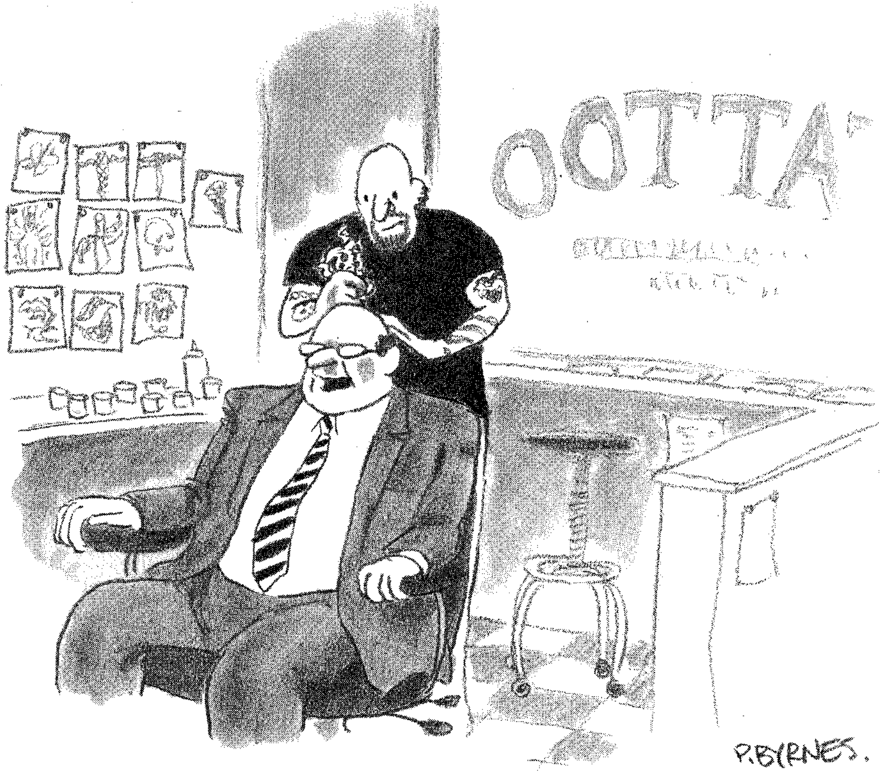
Dahl thought adults should get down on their knees for a week, to remember what it's like when the people with power literally loom over you. Photograph by Snowdon.





"Anything that suggests corporate banking."

• •

readers named him their favorite author. Around the world, more than ten million copies of his books sold last year. This number is all the more striking because Dahl did not write an extended series, which is often the key to mega-success as a children's writer. Nor, in an era when many children's books are specifically marketed to either boys or girls, does his work appeal primarily to one gender. Six of his books have been made into movies, and a monster-budget version of "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" (1964), directed by Tim Burton and starring Johnny Depp as the daft, dangerous, and endlessly inventive confectioner, Willy Wonka, opens in July.

Dahl is also, however, a children's writer whom many adults over the years have disliked or distrusted, though they have not always found it easy to say why. It's not because his work is sexually explicit (a common complaint about, say, Judy Blume's). There is no hint of sex, or even romance, in Dahl's children's books, most of which are intended for preadolescent children. Nor are they disappointing as pieces of writing—quite the opposite. Dahl's books, which move along at a seductively brisk pace, are propelled by crisp verbs ("clambered," "chirruped," "rasped") and delightful made-up words ("swishfiggler," "snozzcumber," "Vermicious Knids"). He plays exuberantly with synonyms ("He's dotty!" they cried. "He's barmy!" "He's batty!" "He's nutty!" "He's screwy!" "He's wacky!"). The tone is conversational, confiding, and funny, with a liberal sprinkling of exclamation points and PHRASES WRITTEN ENTIRELY IN CAPITAL LETTERS. It's as if the sentences came embedded with their own stage directions. (Like "Winnie the Pooh" and "Alice in Wonderland," Dahl's books originated as stories told aloud to children; he had five of his own.) In a Dahl book, you are never out of earshot of a sly authorial voice that is sharing a secret joke about a character—or is announcing that it's about to yank you out of a scene that's becoming a bit too gross or distressing.

Adults' objections to Dahl have more to do with his sensibility. There is bathroom humor: the protagonist of "The B.F.G." (1982), the Big Friendly Giant, insists on "whizpopping," his word for farting, in front of the Queen. And Dahl has a waspish tone—unsentimental, ever so slightly sadistic, and archly amusing—that's closer to Evelyn Waugh's than to Beverly Cleary's. (Lemony Snicket, the author of "A Series of Unfortunate Events," owes a significant debt to Dahl.)

"Matilda" (1988) is the story of a prodigiously bright little girl who suffers at the hands of her boorish mother and father. The book offers a bracingly disdainful commentary on neglectful, selfish parents. But, first, Dahl has a little fun at the expense of the doting ones:

> It's a funny thing about mothers and fathers. Even when their own child is the most disgusting little blister you could ever imagine, they still think he or she is wonderful.
>
> Some parents go further. They become so blinded by adoration they manage to convince themselves their child has qualities of genius.
>
> Well, there's nothing very wrong with all this. It's the way of the world. It's only when the parents begin telling *us* about the brilliance of their own revolting offspring, that we start shouting, "Bring us a basin! We're going to be sick!"
>
> School teachers suffer a good deal from having to listen to this sort of twaddle from proud parents, but they usually get their own back when the time comes to write their end-of-term reports. If I were a teacher, I would cook up some real scorchers for the children of doting parents. "Your son Maximilian," I would write, "is a total wash-out. I hope you have a family business you can push him into when he leaves school because he sure as heck won't get a job anywhere else." Or, if I were feeling lyrical that day, I might write, "It is a curious truth that grasshoppers have their hearing organs in the sides of their abdomen. Your daughter Vanessa, judging by what she's learnt this term, has no hearing organs at all."

Routinely in Dahl's books, adults who mistreat children or animals get grotesque comeuppances, and these are often engineered by the victims, through their own cunning and courage. In "The Twits" (1980), the repellent Mr. and Mrs. Twit are glued upside down to the floor by the enterprising monkeys and birds they've been tormenting. In "James and the Giant Peach" (1961), the evil Aunt Spiker and Aunt Sponge are crushed to death when James and the eponymous peach roll down a hill. And it's not just bad parents who get their comeuppance. In "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," Dahl metes out nasty punishments to unpleasant children. The greedy Augustus Gloop is squeezed into the chocolate works; the gum-chewing Violet Beauregarde blows up into a giant blueberry; the television addict Mike Teavee is miniaturized; the spoiled Veruca Salt is dropped down a garbage chute. That the kids all make it out of the factory in the end doesn't much soften the fact that

Wonka saw them go with no regret—indeed, with considerable glee.

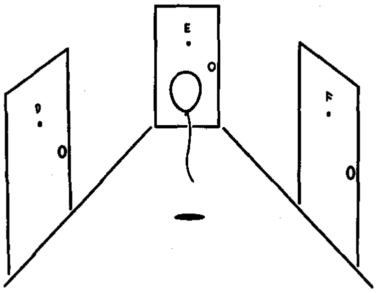
In many children's books—contrary to what parents tell their children about the meaning of appearances—physical ugliness signifies its moral equivalent. Dahl takes this to an extreme, describing his villains' repulsive attributes with brio: Mr. Hazell's "great, glistening, beery face . . . as pink as a ham," in "Danny, the Champion of the World" (1975); Aunt Sponge's resemblance to "a great white soggy overboiled cabbage"; the "grizzly old grunion of a grandma" in "George's Marvelous Medicine" (1981)—the one Dahl book I find irredeemably sour—who has "a small puckered-up mouth, like a dog's bottom." Dahl shared with George Orwell an acute sense of why small children often see adults as unsightly or intimidating. "Part of the reason for the ugliness of adults, in a child's eyes, is that the child is usually looking upward, and few faces are at their best when seen from below," Orwell wrote. Dahl once said that adults should get down on their knees for a week, in order to remember what it's like to live in a world in which the people with all the power literally loom over you.

In Dahl's fiction, the bad characters aren't just bad; they're swing-kids-around-by-their-braids awful—a quality that some adult readers find unsubtle but many children find hilarious and satisfying. Even the good adult characters are often rash or easily cowed, whereas the kids in Dahl's books are usually sensible, mature, and unflappable. (The kids make all the "good decisions," as my nine-year-old son puts it.) And in Dahl's stories the kinds of elaborate schemes that children are forever concocting—and that sensible adults are forever rejecting as impractical or dangerous—yield triumphant results. When the Giant Peach is attacked by sharks while floating across the ocean, James comes up with the idea of attaching loops of string to a flock of seagulls, in order to lift the peach into the air—and, voilà, that's precisely what happens!

Dahl's books regularly show up on the American Library Association's list of titles that patrons ask to be restricted from young children or removed from the shelves. In 1995, a mother attempting to expunge Dahl from elementary-school libraries in Virginia told the Washington *Post* that in his books "children misbehave and take retribution on adults, and there's never, ever a consequence for their actions." According to this surprisingly common critique of Dahl, to defy one adult—no matter how bad a person—is to defy us all.

In 1972, the *Horn Book*, a journal of children's literature, published a screed against Dahl by Eleanor Cameron, a children's-book author. "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," she charged, was "one of the most tasteless books ever written for children." The book was not just about candy; it *was* candy, "in that it is delectable and soothing while we are undergoing the brief sensory pleasure it affords but leaves us poorly nourished with our taste dulled for better fare." Dahl reviled television, but his book provided the same easy satisfactions: it was a fast-paced, plot-driven celebration of empty calories. The science-fiction author Ursula K. LeGuin wrote in to second Cameron's criticism, though she had to admit that "children between eight and eleven seem to be truly fascinated" by Dahl's books. Indeed, one of her own children, she regretted to say, "used to finish 'Charlie' and then start right over from the beginning (she was subject to these fits for about two months at age eleven). She was like one possessed while reading it, and for a while after reading she was, for a usually amiable child, quite nasty." The books, LeGuin concluded, "provide a genuine escape experience, a tiny psychological fugue, very like that provided by comic books."

In the nineteen-eighties, feminists lambasted Dahl for his supposed misogyny, focussing on "The Witches" (1983). In 1985, one critic called the book "a dangerous publication," which bore a "striking similarity" to the "misogynistic" fifteenth-century witch-hunting text "Malleus Maleficarum." It was a bizarre comparison. Dahl does write in "The Witches" that a "witch is always a woman"—but not that a woman is always a witch. The strongest, most appealing character in the book is the boy narrator's cigar-smoking, tough-minded, and immensely loving grandmother.



Anti-Dahlism has been further fuelled by a 1994 unauthorized biography, by the British writer Jeremy Treglown, which presents a complicated, domineering, and sometimes disagreeable man. Dahl was "a war hero, a connoisseur, a philanthropist and a devoted family man who had to confront an appalling succession of tragedies," Treglown writes. "He was also . . . a fantasist, an anti-Semite, a bully and a self-publicizing trouble-maker." When his first wife, the actress Patricia Neal, suffered a severe stroke at the age of thirty-nine, he adopted a cruel-to-be-kind strategy—bullying, goading, and sometimes humiliating her into acting again. He was prone to eruptions of pique. In 1981, Robert Gottlieb, who was at the time the editorial director of Knopf, Dahl's American publisher, severed ties with Dahl, citing his "abusiveness" to the staff. More than once, Dahl offered up anti-Semitic remarks; in 1983, he told a journalist that "there's a trait in the Jewish character that does provoke animosity . . . I mean there is always a reason why anti-anything crops up anywhere; even a stinker like Hitler didn't just pick on them for no reason." (Such noxious sentiments, it must be said, cannot be found in his work for children.) And, in 1989, Dahl, who had no trouble waxing indignant about attempts to ban his own work, denounced Salman Rushdie as "a dangerous opportunist" after the fatwa was issued against him. Dahl's personal reputation is justifiably tainted, but his work has been unfairly assailed. When it comes to literature for adults, we've mostly stopped judging a work by its author's personal morality. Why should we hold children's writers to a stricter standard?

Dahl's own childhood had a lovely, rather magical side, as well as a bitter, Draconian one. He was born in 1916, in Llandaff, Wales, to Norwegian immigrants. His father, Harald, was a successful ship's broker. His formidable and capable mother, Sofie, looked upon him as her favorite; Roald, one of five children, was known as "the apple." When Roald was three, the eldest girl,

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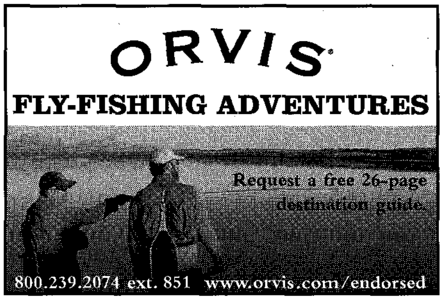
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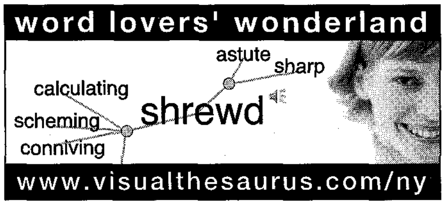
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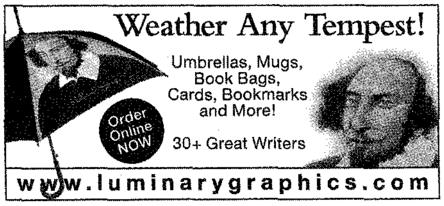
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Astri, who was seven, died of appendicitis. Harald Dahl was so “overwhelmed with grief,” Dahl writes in his 1984 memoir, “Boy,” that he had no strength to fight a bout of pneumonia; he died two months later.

Each summer, Sofie took the children to a remote island in Norway, where Roald heard marvellous stories about witches and trolls, swam in the ice-blue fjords, and ate ice cream with “thousands of little chips of crisp burnt toffee mixed into it.” Yet the British boarding schools that he attended, starting at the age of nine, were mostly a misery. Much of “Boy” consists of Dahl’s recollections of beatings by his headmasters. Caning was the favored mode of punishment. “I was frightened of that cane,” Dahl writes. “There is no small boy in the world who wouldn’t be. It wasn’t simply an instrument for beating you. It was a weapon for wounding. It lacerated the skin. It caused severe black and scarlet bruising that took three weeks to disappear, and all the time during those three weeks, you could feel your heart beating along the wounds.”

When Dahl was at school, his talents seem to have gone unappreciated. A report card from Repton in 1930—which is on display at the new Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre, in Great Missenden—offers the following assessment of his performance in English: “A persistent muddler, writing and saying the opposite of what he means. Fails to correct this by real revision or thought. Has possibilities.” This seems particularly unfair, given that the young Dahl, judging by a sample of his juvenilia at the museum—“The Life Story of a Penny”—already showed flair as a storyteller. But perhaps his teachers didn’t much approve of his nascent sympathy for the underdog—in this case, a lump of copper that must endure having “a picture of King George V’s head stamped cruelly on one side of me.”

One compensation for Dahl was that he excelled at games and sports. Being tall probably protected him from a certain amount of torment, too—as a teenager, he was well on his way to acquiring his adult nicknames, Lofty and Stalky. He and the other boys at Repton also enjoyed a curious perk, courtesy of the Cadbury chocolate company. “Every now and again, a plain grey cardboard box was dished out to each boy in our House,” Dahl writes in “Boy.” Inside were eleven chocolate bars—aspirants to the Cadbury line. Dahl and the other boys got to rate the candy, and they took their task very seriously. (“Too subtle for the common palate” was one of Dahl’s assessments.) He later recalled this as the first time that he thought of chocolate bars as something concocted—the product of a laboratory setting—and the thought stayed with him until he invented his own crazy factory.

Dahl is brilliant at evoking the childhood obsession with candy, which most adults can recall only vaguely. In his books, candy is often a springboard for long riffs on imagined powers and possibilities. Far from being the crude ode to instant gratification that critics like Cameron detect, Dahl’s evocation of candy is an impetus to wonder. When Billy, the boy in “The Giraffe, the Pelly, and Me” (1985), opens his own candy shop—talk about wish fulfillment!—he orders confections from all over the world. “I can remember especially the Giant Wangdoodles from Australia, every one with a huge ripe red strawberry hidden inside its crispy chocolate crust,” he says. “And The Electric Fizzcocklers that made every hair on your head stand straight up on end. . . . There was a whole lot of splendid stuff from the great Wonka factory itself, for example the famous Willy Wonka Rainbow Drops—suck them and you can spit in seven different colours. And his stickjaw for talkative parents.” The word “confection” has a double meaning in Dahl’s world—candy is a source not only of sweetness but of creativity. On a field trip recently, I sat next to three nine-year-old boys who spent forty-five minutes in a Wonka-inspired reverie, inventing their own candies.

When Dahl left Repton, in 1934, he did not go to college but instead took a job with Shell, which eventually sent him to East Africa to sell oil. When the Second World War broke out, Dahl joined the R.A.F. as a fighter pilot. “Going Solo,” the sequel to “Boy,” offers lively accounts of Dahl’s encounters with African wildlife—especially the dread black mamba snake—and eccentric British expatriates, “this pack of sinewy sunburnt gophers and their bright bony little wives.” And it contains thrilling stories of Dahl’s experiences flying missions over the Mediterranean. In 1940, he crashed in the Sahara, and suffered injuries that caved in his nose. The plastic surgeon who rebuilt the nose tried, unsuccessfully, to make it look like Rudolph Valentino's.

When Dahl began to suffer blackouts as a result of his crash injuries, he stopped flying, and in 1942 went to Washington, D.C., as a military attaché. He met Martha Gellhorn and Ernest Hemingway and played poker with Senator Harry Truman. He began to write up some of his wartime experiences. He also met Walt Disney, to whom he sold "The Gremlins," his first children's story. It was based on an R.A.F. legend of gnomelike creatures with the capacity to sabotage a flight. (No movie version was ever produced.)

Most of Dahl's early writing was for adults. He specialized in wartime stories and macabre tales with surprise endings, or what the British call "a twist in the tail." In a typical story, a wife kills her husband with a frozen leg of lamb, then cooks the murder weapon and serves it to police investigators. But by the early sixties some of that success had begun petering out. *The New Yorker*, which had earlier accepted several stories, now sent rejection notices. Dahl's adult stories were crisply, shiveringly enjoyable—rather like "Twilight Zone" episodes—but they showed little compassion or psychological penetration. It was children, it seemed, not adults, on whom Dahl could lavish empathy.

In 1953, he married Patricia Neal, who had recently ended a long affair with Gary Cooper, and the following year bought a house in Buckinghamshire, near his mother and sisters. Dahl adored his children, but in his family life he suffered several tragedies. His baby son, Theo, was badly injured when a car hit the carriage his nanny was pushing across a street in Manhattan. He survived but suffered from hydrocephalus. A daughter, Olivia, died from measles at the age of seven. Treglown writes that, shortly after Olivia's death, Dahl and Neal visited his old headmaster, the retired Archbishop of Canterbury. Dahl wanted to think that Olivia could have the companionship of dogs in the afterlife, because she had loved them so in life. He was furious when the Archbishop told him that the Christian vision of Heaven did not include canines.

In 1965, Neal suffered a stroke while she was pregnant with the couple's fifth daughter, Lucy. While she recovered, Dahl took over running the household; he even drove the kids to school in the morning. If he was sometimes moody or gruff or turned on people who disappointed him, who can blame him? He was pragmatic and resourceful. Prompted by Theo's difficulties, he helped devise a valve for draining water on the brain which was used to treat thousands of children. And if he was not physically affectionate with his children—as Tessa Dahl, his eldest daughter, has written—he shared their interest in pranks, knock-knock jokes, and incessant teasing. He also had a gift for creating an aura of magic. Dahl once directed Tessa to look at the grass below her bedroom window. Fairies, he explained, had inscribed her name on the lawn. (He'd done it himself, by sprinkling weed killer.) When the Dahls hosted slumber parties, he'd rouse the children at midnight, take them outside, and tell them stories under a tree.

After thirty years of marriage, Dahl divorced Neal, and, in 1983, he married Felicity Crosland, a wood-carver with whom he had been having a long affair. He seems to have found greater happiness and serenity with Felicity, who was fond of gardening and cooking. Tessa Dahl has observed of her father, "When in 1983 he wrote, in 'The Witches,' 'It doesn't matter who you are or what you look like as long as somebody loves you,' he was a changing writer. My father had fallen in love. When he married my stepmother in the early eighties, everything altered."

Several of Dahl's best books—"The B.F.G.," "The Witches," "Matilda"—were written during this late period. In these works, his natural acidity is tempered with sweetness. Each book centers on a relationship between a child and an adult which is a dream of perfect understanding and companionability. The boy protagonist of "The Witches" adores his Grandmamma, who tells him the gruesome truth about witches and helps him defeat them. When the boy is transformed into a mouse—one that still has his own voice and feelings—he is comforted to realize that, with a mouse's shorter life span, he won't outlive her. He tells her happily, "I'll be a very old mouse and you'll be a very old grandmother and soon after that we'll both die together." (None of Dahl's ideal adult companions are mothers—they are fathers, grandparents, or mother surrogates, such as the ladybug in "James and the Giant Peach.") In "The B.F.G.," an orphaned and unloved girl, Sophie, forms a strong friendship with the only living giant who refuses to eat human beings:

> "Words," he said, "is oh such a twitch-tickling problem to me all my life. So you must simply try to be patient and stop squibbling. As I am telling you before, I know exactly what words I am wanting to say, but somehow or other they is always getting squiffs-quiddled around."
>
> "That happens to everyone," Sophie said.
>
> "Not like it happens to me," the B.F.G.

"Oh, I'm not really milking her. I do this so I don't have to make eye contact with anybody."

said. "I is speaking the most terrible wigglish."

"I think you speak beautifully," Sophie said.

"You do?" cried the B.F.G., suddenly brightening. "You really do?"

"Simply beautifully," Sophie repeated.

"Well that is the nicest present anyone is ever giving me in my whole life!" cried the B.F.G. "Are you sure you is not twiddling my leg?"

"Of course not," Sophie said. "I just love the way you talk.

"How wondercrump!" cried the B.F.G., still beaming. "How whoopsy-splunkers. How absolutely squiffling! I is all of a stutter."

And yet the essence of Dahl is his willingness to let children triumph over adults. He is a modern writer of fairy tales, who intuitively understands the sort of argument that Bruno Bettelheim made in his 1976 book, "The Uses of Enchantment." Children need the dark materials of fairy tales because they need to make sense—in a symbolic, displaced way—of their own feelings of anger, resentment, and powerlessness. Children also benefit from learning about violence and brutishness in fairy tales, Bettelheim writes, for it counters the "widespread refusal to let children know that the source of much that goes wrong in our life is due to our natures—the propensity of all men for acting aggressively, asocially, selfishly." Many fairy tales—and most of Dahl's work—are complex narratives of wish fulfillment. They teach the reader, Bettelheim writes, that "a struggle against severe difficulties in life is unavoidable, is an intrinsic part of human existence—but if one does not shy away, but steadfastly meets unexpected and often unjust hardships, one masters all obstacles and at the end emerges victorious." Or, in any case, this is a hopeful fantasy which sustains us all.

Dahl's most memorable protagonists—Charlie, James, Matilda—are timid characters who nevertheless succeed. Quiet, polite Charlie Bucket is the unexpected winner of Wonka's contest precisely because he is quiet and polite. Little James is an orphan—on the very first page, his parents are dispatched by an angry rhinoceros that has escaped from the London Zoo—who is humiliated and beaten by his aunts. By befriending the eccentric insects who live in the prodigious peach in his back yard, and giving free rein to his own sweet ingenuity, he gets across the ocean to New York, where news of his feat brings "hundreds and hundreds of children" to the door of his new peach-stone house, in Central Park. "The saddest and loneliest little boy that you could find now had all the friends and playmates in the world," Dahl writes. Matilda discovers a secret power to move objects merely by thinking—a power that is attributed to her mind's not being challenged enough. (This theory makes a lot of sense to kids, who can still imagine that vast territories of their brains have yet to be explored.) She uses her magical skill to write an accusatory message on the blackboard at school, which terrifies her nemesis, a floridly nasty headmistress named Miss Trunchbull, into fleeing her post.

There is no evidence that Dahl ever read Bettelheim, and none that he was the sort of man who would have gone in for psychoanalysis. But there is evidence that he thought about childhood in a way that placed struggle and conflict at the center of things, much as psychoanalysis does. "I have very strong and almost profound views on how a child has to fight its way through life and grow up to the age of, let's say, twelve," Dahl told a BBC interviewer in 1988. "All their lives they're being disciplined. When you're born or when you're one or two or three, you're an uncivilized creature. And from that age, right up to twelve or fifteen, if you are going to become civilized and become a member of the community, you're going to have to be disciplined. Severely. Stop eating with your fingers and spitting on the floor and swearing and anything else you want to mention. And who does this disciplining? It is two people. It's the parents. . . . Although the child loves her mother and father, they are subconsciously the enemy. There's a fine line, I think, between loving your parents deeply and resenting them."

Most of Dahl's young readers are presumably not mistreated, and yet they intuitively understand that the beatings and humiliations meted out to his young characters are metaphors for the powerlessness of being a child. And they appreciate that Dahl so nakedly takes their side. Adult readers, meanwhile, are given a renewed sense of children's separateness—and, sometimes, their rage. Dahl's attunement to the aggressive labors of civilizing a child is no longer fashionable; it smacks of generational conflict, Oedipal struggles, and the grim days when children had to eat all the food on their plates, even if it was liver and onions. Such raw displays of adult power, which marked the lives of many children when Dahl was growing up, in the nineteen-twenties, are no longer common, thankfully. Perhaps this explains some of the adult resistance to Dahl's books: as parenting has become more self-consciously "nice," with less firm divisions between grownups and children, it's unsettling to read narratives of unbridled childish resentment. (Matilda uses her superior brain power to exact devious revenge on her own parents.) We believe that we understand and communicate with our children far better than our parents or grandparents did with theirs, and we therefore can't imagine that our kids could secretly feel oppressed by our reasonable and enlightened approach to child-rearing. Dahl's books mercilessly upend this illusion of harmony.

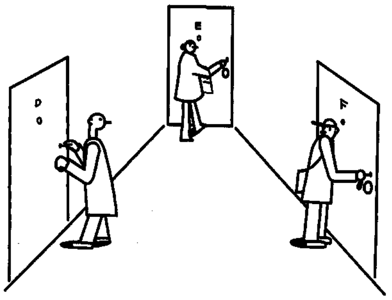
Fortunately, the violent subtext of the books is often leavened by the delightful illustrations of Quentin Blake, who began working with Dahl in the nineteen-seventies. Blake's loose, sketchy, bemused drawings underscore the comical and the absurd sides of Dahl's work. Blake was sometimes unnerved by the savage and scary elements of Dahl's stories, but he came to appreciate what a visual writer Dahl was. Dahl, who had an unusually vivid sense of what his characters looked like, believed that many children's books had too few illustrations—and was greatly pleased when Blake managed to generate a hundred drawings for "Matilda."

Like an indulgent father offering extra helpings of dessert, Dahl was eager to give children more of what they craved: more pictures; more fantasies of mastery; more sly mockery of grouchy, boring adults; more visions of dizzying enjoyment. Recently, a nine-year-old friend of my son's wrote me a letter about why he likes Dahl: "His writing is imaginative and exciting, and after I read 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory,' I felt like tasting all the candy in the world." It was an excellent way of evoking the delights of Dahl, whose best stories do what G. K. Chesterton, in his essay "The Ethic of Elfland," said that fairy tales did: inspire in children a sense that life "is not only a pleasure but an eccentric privilege." Dahl's purse-lipped critics fail to recognize that his stories don't merely indulge a child's fantasies—they replenish them. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Bangkok Tattoo, *by John Burdett (Knopf; $24).* Bangkok's red-light districts, perhaps the most infamous in the world, have inspired their share of breathless prose. Here, however, the tone is mordant, thanks to the serene narration of Sonchai Jitpleecheep, the Thai police detective who steered readers through Burdett's previous novel, "Bangkok 8." A devout Buddhist, Sonchai makes complex karmic calculations to justify his roles as law-bending cop and part-time *papasan* at his mother's go-go bar. When the bar's biggest moneymaker is suspected of killing her john, who turns out to be C.I.A., Sonchai initiates a coverup that eventually involves Muslim separatists in southern Thailand and American operatives eager to exploit post-9/11 paranoia for career advancement. The plot showcases Burdett's sly riffs on Third World stereotypes, Buddhism, and the gustatory pleasures of fried grasshoppers. It's a giddy, occasionally over-the-top performance, but mesmerizing: a comic tour of the underbelly of Bangkok in pursuit of both a murderer and the sublime.

Lizzie's War, *by Tim Farrington (Harper; $24.95).* Farrington's urgent, moving narrative turns the war novel on its head. It's 1967, and while Mike O'Reilly, a career marine, is getting shot at in Vietnam, his wife, Lizzie, is dodging domestic shrapnel: she's two months into an unplanned pregnancy, she flinches every time the doorbell rings, and her four children, at school, are hearing that their father is a baby-killer. While Mike's active-duty letters, full of mud and gore, form part of the story, it is Farrington's unsparing account of Lizzie's life at home—the desperately untidy house, her small attempts to carve out time for herself, her mounting anxiety—that takes the novel beyond its particular time and place and makes it a captivating study of tenderness and blame.



A Hundred and One Days, *by Åsne Seierstad, translated from the Norwegian by Ingrid Christophersen (Basic; $22.95).* Seierstad, a Norwegian who earned her stripes as a correspondent in Grozny and Kabul, went to Iraq two months before the bombs came. Her memoir touches all the familiar topics of prewar Iraq reporting: Baghdad's poverty; the ubiquity of Saddam icons; Iraqis' reluctance to confide their dislike of his regime; and, most prominently, the regime's stifling control over visiting reporters. Her hundred and one days in Baghdad, however, come to an end even before the premature declaration that combat is over, and she can only hint at the intractable conflict that has engulfed Iraq in the two years since then. These dispatches, described as "snapshots," are human-interest pieces, focussing on the anxieties of ordinary Iraqis rather than on the geopolitical upheaval outside her hotel window. Seierstad's depictions of quotidian suffering are affecting, if sometimes saccharine, as the tyranny of Saddam gives way to the lawless chaos of the American invasion.

Turn the Beat Around, *by Peter Shapiro (Faber & Faber; $26).* To its detractors, disco was nothing but a pageant of glitter and Ultrasuede, but Shapiro's history emphasizes its roots in nineteen-seventies New York, where hippie idealism had given way to stagflation and gang warfare. While the city decayed, marginal communities—gays, blacks, Latinos—congregated in abandoned warehouses to commune on makeshift dance floors. Shapiro argues that disco was "glamour as defiance," a movement that promoted racial integration and aided the mainstreaming of homosexuality. His book ranges widely, from Nazi Germany, where Swing Jugend (proto-discogoers, in Shapiro's view) met covertly to dance to "degenerate" jazz, to the rooftops of the Bronx, where Latino gangs did the hustle. This dance step, curiously, found favor with the conservative columnist William Safire, because it required a partner, and thus responsibility.

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THE ART WORLD

TWO VIEWS

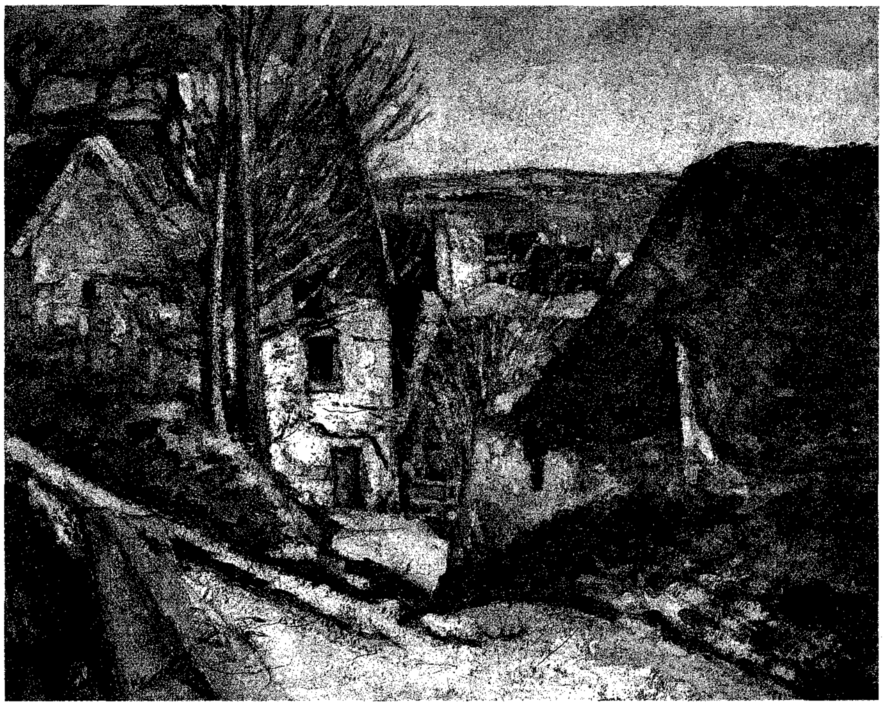
Cézanne vs. Pissarro.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

In terms of a viewer's chief experience, "Pioneering Modern Painting: Cézanne & Pissarro, 1865-1885," at the Museum of Modern Art, is a show about Paul Cézanne: what he did, how it works, and why it's classical. Camille Pissarro, a likable man and a delightful artist, important in any number of contingent ways, is not in the same league as that driven revolutionary. Not since the similarly titled "Picasso and Braque: Pioneering Cubism," in 1989-90, has MOMA, or any other museum that I can think of, produced such a pitiless comparison of stylistically related painters, one great and one just very good, with results that are instructive—providing vigorous exercise for the thinking eye—while sort of painful. The mismatch isn't as drastic as it might have been, because the Cézanne in this show, which stops when he was forty-six years old—eight years younger than Pissarro—had yet to attain the full flower of his talents. (To see that, take the escalator to the first gallery of the permanent collection, where five Cézannes, dating from 1885 to 1906, reign in clenched, strenuous majesty.) But, from the start, there's no contest. The show's drama is ambient, in the fact that it has been allowed to happen. It was organized by Pissarro's great-grandson, Joachim, a curator in the museum's Department of Painting and Sculpture. This lends an air of fond nepotism, which proves peculiarly subversive. As if slipped past a nodding doorkeeper, Pissarro's earnestly ingratiating pictures jangle the museum's policy of fiercely screened modernness—a Draconian mania that is ever more played out.

The idea of their being pitted against each other would have surprised Pissarro, a French-Creole Jew from the West Indies, and Cézanne, a coarse Provençal. Their quarter-century friendship, during which they sometimes painted side by side, was forged in shared senses of social alienation and a generational crusade. (It ended after Cézanne holed up for good in Provence, in the mid-eighteen-eighties.) In Pissarro, Cézanne found an older colleague who didn't laugh at his gaucheries. They met in the period of the 1863 Salon des Refusés, when the insurrection against the academic art world had rallied around the incendiary figures of Gustave Courbet and Édouard Manet. Cézanne and Pissarro, in their earliest paintings here, are thoroughly, earthily Courbet-like, immune to Manet-esque, sparkling urbanity. Abetted by their critical champion Émile Zola, they aimed their competitive rage outward, at the establishment. Pissarro, a declared anarchist, recommended burning down the Louvre. Cézanne characterized art schools this way: "Teachers are all castrated bastards and assholes. They have no guts!" We are on the familiar ground of modern art's creation saga, with knights of the new beset by howling and jeering philistines. Are we ready to be over that coercive romance? If so, team membership in the avant-garde no longer elides the differences between the amiable Pissarro and the unbending Cézanne.

Take one of several telling juxtapositions on offer: Pissarro's "The Conversation, chemin du chou, Pontoise" (1874) and Cézanne's "The House of the Hanged Man, Auvers-sur-Oise" (1873). Each is about two feet high and a bit wider; both show roads in rural towns, with steep-roofed houses. The Pissarro, set in a wooded valley, with two small figures, is quietly sumptuous. Layered, highly varied patches and strokes—*les taches* and *les touches*, the standard ingredients of School of Paris painterly cuisine—in greens, grays, and gray-greens conjure masses of absolute summer under a blue-blushing sky. The tonality and chroma of the scene's over-all, milky light are monotonous, in a manner typical of the artist; they are tasteful. Pissarro was prone to superfluous nuance and conventional pictorial unity. Now Cézanne. Looking down into a cluster of buildings on a hillside, he sorts out an astonishing congeries of overlapping planes and textures—anticipating the nested bumps and hollows of tactile space that would one day preoccupy Cubism. Though the picture has been called his Impressionist masterpiece, its glowing colors sug-



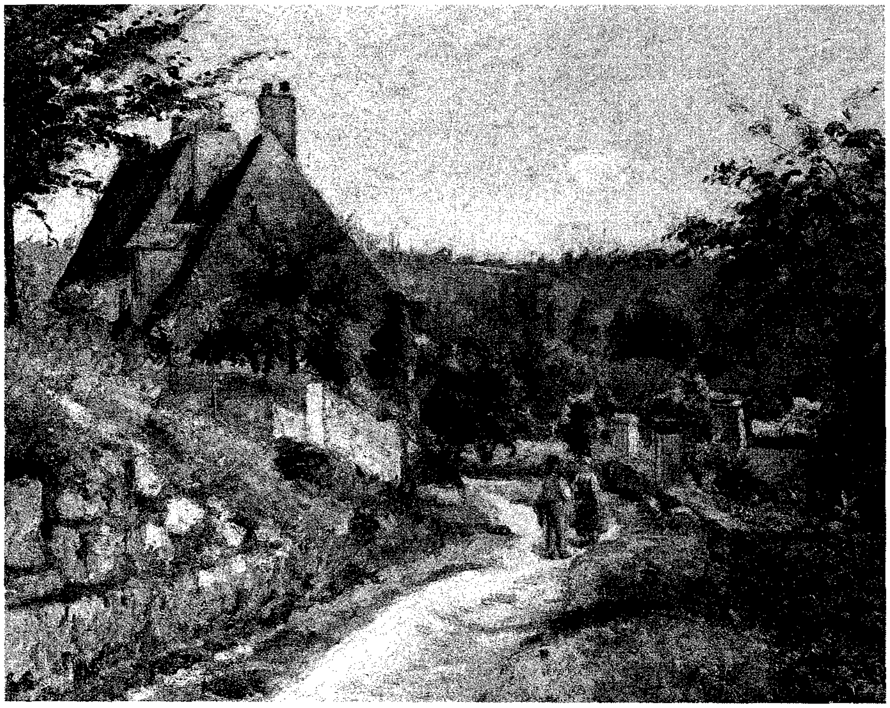
Paul Cézanne's "The House of the Hanged Man, Auvers-sur-Oise" (1873).

MUSÉE D'ORSAY, PARIS/RMN/ART RESOURCE. OPPOSITE: PRIVATE COLLECTION

gest not scintillant atmosphere but molecular oneness with walls, trees, and dirt that are drenched in sun and shade. Light and what it illuminates register as one thing.

A work of art, Zola said, is "a corner of the creation seen through a temperament." Pissarro and Cézanne swore by that individualist credo, which enjoined truth to raw sensation and its sincere rendering. Every proper artist "is more or less a realist according to his eyes," Zola went on to say, brilliantly. Pissarro and Cézanne both painted what they saw, but Cézanne went farther, in painting *as* he saw: point to point, with alarmed responsiveness to every zone, contour, and passage. He had the stronger, more peremptory temperament, to put it mildly. Cézanne wedged his eccentricities of vision between art and nature, and neither has been the same since. As he developed, he let compositional harmony take care of itself, which it does by way of edge-to-edge, fairly gruelling intensity. Cézannes can seem to have as many centers of attention as they have brushstrokes. They are also rarely much fun to look at. (It helps to imagine that you are a painter yourself, attending a master class.) He isn't interested in making anything easier for us than it was for him. He's barbaric, still. Pissarro, bending his sensation to picturesque and decorative charms, is civilized. Even when I'm disappointed with the spirit of one of his works—keenly so by a timidity in the almost swashbuckling "The Climbing Path, L'Hermitage, Pontoise" (1875), which features some forward-crowding splotches that shrug off realist description—I can't help but get pleasure from it. And there's nothing felonious in that.

This show reminds us that the difficulty of Cézanne is the spiritual cornerstone of the Museum of Modern Art. In the early twentieth century, influential artists and intellectuals in Europe and America agreed to exalt Cézanne's obstreperousness as the echt modern mind-set, thereby instituting a cultural oligarchy of experts which even now, though with mounting self-doubt, stands against popular tastes. You can't say something bad about Cézanne in the discourses called "modernist" any more than you can gainsay Jesus with language from Christian liturgy. Such is the authority of Cézanne's attitude that only palpable surrender to it may win another artist approbation. The humbling of Pissarro in this show is thus as foregone as that of Braque was in "Pioneering Cubism." Braque, for all his extraordinary abilities, needed Cubism in order to enter the modern canon, as Pissarro needed Impressionism. Picasso, like Cézanne, needed only to show up. Writing in the exhibition catalogue, Joachim Pissarro doesn't explicitly complain of a deck stacked by his employers against his ancestor, but he verges on it when he proposes to understand the dynamic of the show "as a spectacular chess game . . . rather than as the first step toward modernism." This amounts to a plea, against ideological correctness, for values of old-fashioned connoisseurship, which are nugatory only for people who take no joy in using their eyes.



Camille Pissarro's "The Conversation, chemin du chou, Pontoise" (1874).

"Cézanne & Pissarro" is best savored at close quarters. Bring reading glasses. The two painters, during the height of their relationship, did indeed play a kind of chess, with ingenious technical moves and countermoves. In how many ways can a roofline abut foliage or the sky? What is the syntax of meadows? What color is shadow? At one point, each artist was painting with a palette knife in one hand and a brush in the other. Smooth and creamy alternate with rough and crusted, reflecting or absorbing light. Recent X-rays have revealed an intermittent, shared innovation that has been termed painting "in reserve": contours that started out as slivers of bare canvas, rather than lines, between shapes. The gambit, which makes drawing a by-product of painting instead of its armature (and which portends a good deal of later practice, notably Henri Matisse's tour de force "The Red Studio"), helps to explain an often remarked sense, in Cézanne, that edges aren't boundaries but places where paint, surging across the surface, changes color. In command of the same device, Pissarro characteristically soft-pedalled. Why couldn't he bear down a little more? It's a question about the kind of personality required for an art of combative ambition. The answer may be that, unlike his congenitally aggrieved colleague, Pissarro was too contented a man ever to be satisfactorily modern. ♦

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

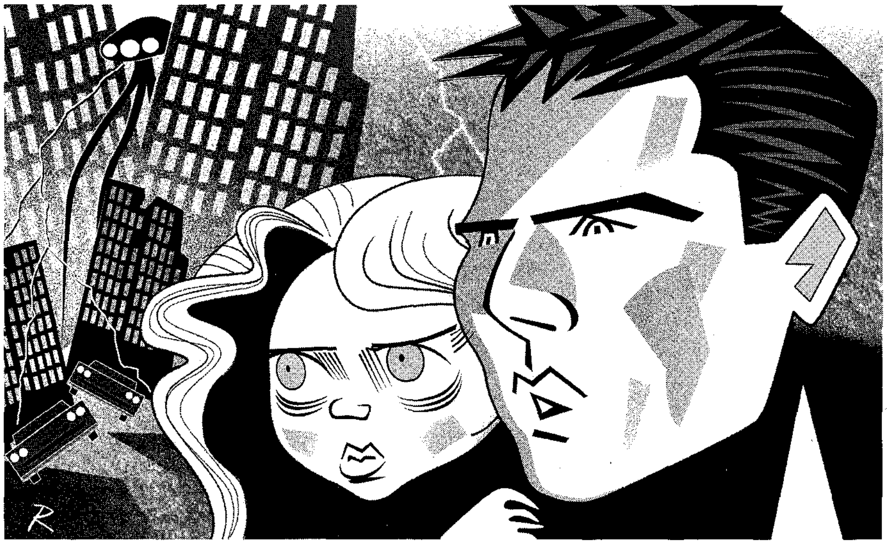
STAYIN' ALIVE

"War of the Worlds" and "Hustle & Flow."

BY DAVID DENBY

There are no experts in Steven Spielberg's "War of the Worlds"—no brilliant scientists from Caltech or M.I.T. talking of roentgens or alien blood types. And no military-intelligence officers, either, or any of the other authorities wearing thick glasses who showed up in science-fiction movies a half century ago (including George Pal's version of "War of the Worlds," from 1953) and who became so much a part of the mythology of disaster. The White House is not heard from, and worried diplomats do not meet at the United Nations to address the crisis. In this stark, horror-movie take on H. G. Wells's 1898 classic, the aliens land in noisy flashes of lightning, imperceptible as jellyfish as they clamber down jagged bolts. They quickly activate the war machines that they buried in the ground eons earlier, reappear on the surface of the earth inside giant tripods, and begin crunching across the American landscape, vaporizing everything in sight. The destruction is immediate and total. In Pal's movie, a group of men and women survive when they gather inside a church to pray. In this movie, the aliens knock over a church right away, steeple first, and no one ever prays. From the human point of view, the "war" is nothing but an endless massacre, without any illusion of rescue or safe haven. We are, it seems, alone: our leaders and our military can't save us, and the movie turns into a rather dogged epic of attempted survival, with people wandering about haplessly, like the residents of Dresden after the firebombing. Tom Cruise, as Ray, a Jersey dockworker and lousy father, will either succeed in protecting his two kids as they all scurry across the countryside or get pulverized into white powder along with everyone else.

As a physical realization of disaster, parts of the picture are stunning. Spielberg has always been a master of premonition, anticipation, and arrival; many of us have happy memories of the radiant epiphanies in "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," in which extraterrestrials, their scaly arms outstretched, emerged from supernal light as a higher form of benevolent being. In "War of the Worlds," the moment of arrival turns completely sinister: the wind blows toward, rather than away from, the dark swirling clouds of a storm; lightning strikes with a heavy metallic clang that goes right through one's body; a passenger train, flames mysteriously pouring out of every window, roars through an intersection, out of control. When Spielberg uses digital special effects, they have an appalling weight—the heft and fling of huge masses hurled through space. A ferry overturning, with cars sliding into the water like enormous dishes falling off a tilted tray, makes the special effects in "Titanic" look insubstantial and obvious. The world in this movie is cast into a vortex. In old sci-fi movies, filmmakers would cut to a still shot of a building vulnerable to a hit, and, sure enough—*pow!*—the building would get zapped. But Spielberg keeps the camera moving, one shot flowing into the next, and the destruction, caught on the fly, has the volatility of surprise. In one scene, Cruise hurtles along the street right toward the camera, which is rapidly receding before him, and buildings and people on all sides of him disintegrate, while the street itself puckers and bubbles like a fondue at the boil.



Dakota Fanning and Tom Cruise in Steven Spielberg's movie.

In the scenes of panic and riot, fear is not just an emotion; it's a physical shock to the body. At one point, Ray comes back to his house in Newark and slowly realizes that the white ash caking his face is all that's left of his neighbors. It's a good moment for Cruise—he doesn't overdo it—and he has others. Ray is a descendant of the character that Cruise used to play ten or fifteen years ago—the callow young guy who has got the stuff and the ambition but who lacks a soul and must learn to care about something. Ray, a divorced man in his forties, is still a hot shot, living alone with an empty fridge; he doesn't know how to talk to his kids, who are staying with him for the weekend. It's the right role for Cruise, but the movie is so devoted to him, so star-driven, that it begins to seem a little demented. The world is smashed and broken, with millions dead, but here's our Tom, with his undeniable sincerity, his mastiff determination, and his limited interest as an actor, and we are asked to concern ourselves with nothing but his journey to maturity.

There isn't even a hint of a subplot,

of destinies intertwined: when Ray's seventeen-year-old son (Justin Chatwin) peels off, the movie doesn't follow his adventures but stays with Ray and his clever little daughter (Dakota Fanning). Almost immediately, father and daughter wander into an abandoned house in which bug-eyed Tim Robbins, clutching a shotgun, has holed up in the basement. I think it might be stated as a general rule that no one in a movie should ever enter a basement where Tim Robbins lurks; and certainly this movie, suddenly static, begins to die at that point. As the scenes of destruction cease, one has time to ponder the oddity of a science-fiction movie without science, or even routine curiosity. Who are the aliens? What is their chemical makeup and how might they be vulnerable? What does the attack mean? Nobody raises any of these issues. The movie is given over to a family in flight, the primal survivalist drama. It's as if the aliens landed and everyone died so that Tom Cruise could grow up one more time.

As a South Memphis pimp named DJay, Terrence Howard, the star of "Hustle & Flow" (opening on July 22nd), speaks in a soft, smoky voice that trails off into nothingness. DJay is very shrewd, but his life is at a dead end, and he knows it. He runs three girls out of an old multicolored Chevrolet; the tricks who roll up next to him have air-conditioning in their cars, and DJay doesn't. He sells drugs on the side, but he's halfhearted about it—the drugs are most useful not for making money but as a way of bribing a neighbor into doing a favor. It is the conceit of "Hustle & Flow" that this petty criminal is a man of decency and promise, and Howard, a major actor (he was the harassed TV director in "Crash"), anchors the conceit in flesh and blood. His chattering hustler has the obscure, ruminative wit of a street-corner philosopher who implies more than he says; Howard turns his come-ons and rants into a sullen art. The movie asks whether that particular art is convertible yet again—whether DJay's hustle can be transformed into the thumping flow of the Memphis-style rap known as crunk. As Howard develops DJay's frustration and rue, he avoids the obvious, the overemphatic. His self-mocking performance is so ironically refined and allusive that one might think that Duke Ellington himself had slipped into an old undershirt and hit the fetid streets of Memphis.

The movie is at its best when the writer-director, Craig Brewer, a white man from Memphis, simply noses around the scraggly neighborhoods and down-at-the-heels clubs of his old home town. This is a hot-weather picture: everything unfolds in the kind of Southern steam that wilts any effort aimed at more than mere survival. Such cinematic time-passing is fine with me. I could easily spend two hours just watching Howard hassling the working girls (Taryn Manning, Taraji P. Henson, and Paula Jai Parker, all terrific) or listening to Howard and Isaac Hayes, who plays a club owner, greet each other—their conversational manner is that rich. But, with an awkward lurch, and an eye on DJay's possible redemption, the movie shifts into a conventionally upbeat show-business story: DJay assembles a group of irregulars, including a henpecked sound engineer (Anthony Anderson); a skinny white guy (D. J. Qualls) who makes his living servicing concession machines but knows how to lay down crunk's bass-heavy tracks; and one of DJay's women, Shug (Henson), who learns to sing an introductory hook. Using DJay's bottom-dog laments ("It's hard out here for a pimp when you're trying to get the money for the rent," etc.), this gang works up a song, "Whoop Dat Trick," which they hope will be a hit. As a myth of creation, the putting together of the song, element by element, over a period of days, is enormously enjoyable, even if it isn't especially convincing.

"Hustle & Flow" may resemble other show-business fables in its over-all shape, but it has an acrid flavor all its own. DJay places his bets for success on presenting "Whoop Dat Trick" and other songs to a Memphis-born rapper named Skinny Black—Chris (Ludacris) Bridges—who has made a fortune in the music business and is back in town for a few days. Howard and Ludacris memorably met once before, in the front seat of an S.U.V. in "Crash." This meeting, which goes through assorted moods of screw-you indifference, drunken bonhomie, and crazy violence in about ten minutes of hair-raising screen time, tops the earlier one. "Hustle & Flow" ends with a burst of movie-ish mayhem, and then a burst of sentiment, but when Brewer, Howard, and Ludacris stick to the bitter texture of South Memphis failure and success they produce a modest regional portrait that could become a classic of its kind. ♦

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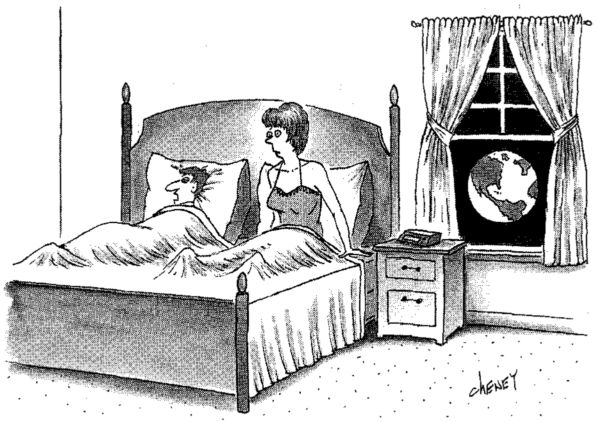
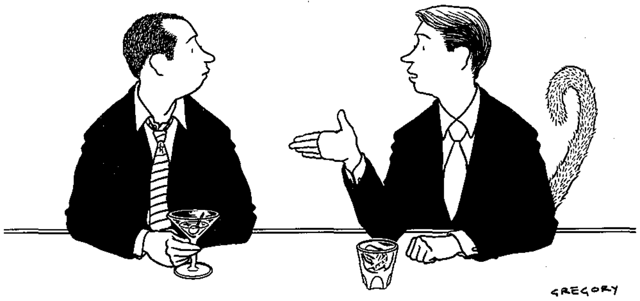
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Frank Cotham, must be received by Sunday, July 17th. Finalists in the June 27th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the August 1st issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Relax, honey—everybody gets buyer's remorse."
Anisha S. Dasgupta, New Haven, Conn.



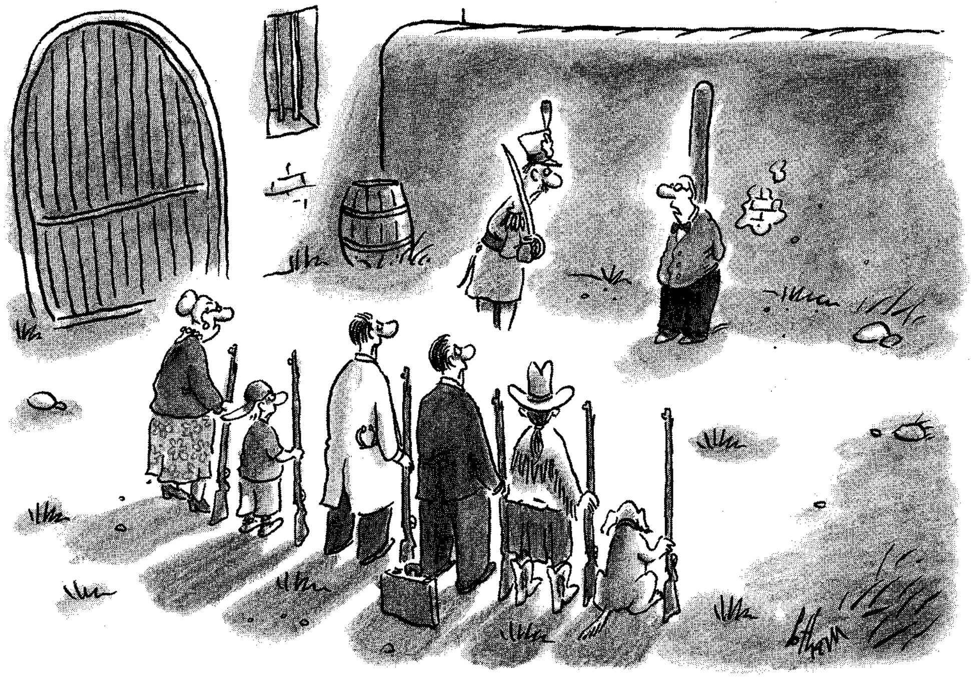
THE FINALISTS

"Try telling that to the Kansas Board of Education."
Bob Schwartz, Cincinnati, Ohio

"Simple. I just wear my pants backward."
Don Hailman, Wheaton, Ill.

"What's more important, youthful hair or F.D.A. approval?"
Rachel Kirkwood, Lexington, Ky.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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